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NEHEMIAH  
A MODEL  
FOR MEN OF BUSINESS  
—  
*STOWELL.*

L

LECTURES  
ON  
THE CHARACTER OF NEHEMIAH.



A MODEL FOR MEN OF BUSINESS:  
OR,  
LECTURES  
ON THE  
CHARACTER OF NEHEMIAH.

BY THE LATE  
HUGH STOWELL, M.A.

RECTOR OF CHRIST CHURCH, SALFORD; HONORARY CANON OF CHESTER;  
CHAPLAIN TO THE LORD BISHOP OF MANCHESTER;  
AND RURAL DEAN.



*Fourth Edition.*

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## DEDICATION.

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MY BELOVED FLOCK,

These Lectures, preached for your edification, and reported through your kindness, have been carefully revised, and are now dedicated to you as an expression of the grateful affection of one who, throughout a ministry in Christ Church embracing nearly a quarter of a century, has ever had reason to love you more and more. No pastor can have had a people more faithful in their attachment, more delicate in their attentions, or more generous in their sympathies, than mine have been. I have not been insensible: if I have said little, it has been because I felt much.

This volume will have one attraction for you. It is a fair specimen of my ordinary ministrations amongst you—of the way in which I have striven to weave the golden threads of evangelical doctrine into the texture of everyday duty and character. May He—without whose blessing no effort can avail, and with whose blessing even mine will be effectual—overrule these



pages to an increase of true religion amongst you!  
'And the very God of Peace sanctify you wholly, and I  
pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be  
preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus  
Christ.'

I am, my beloved flock,

Your faithful and affectionate Friend  
and Pastor,

HUGH STOWELL.

LEAF SQUARE,  
*April 10, 1854.*

## INTRODUCTION TO SECOND EDITION.

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IN furnishing a fresh edition of my little volume to the Christian public, I avail myself of the opportunity thus offered to annex a few explanatory remarks, in consequence of the strictures of two or three reviewers. It is right that I should acknowledge the many friendly and favourable notices which, without any interposition on my part, a large number of periodicals have accorded to my work. At the same time, two, at least, have expressed disappointment at the want of more profound disquisition, more full exposition of Scripture, and more enlarged treatment of important moral questions, in my lectures. Let it then be allowed me to state in explanation,—that my desire in publishing was to supply to my flock, and especially to the mercantile portion, a plain practical handbook, which should require no great sacrifice of time, or exertion of attention, to make it useful to them. To be brief I was obliged to compress, and to be plain I was obliged to shun recondite dissertations. Besides, in a course of biographical illustrations do we not naturally look for what is graphic and

palpable, rather than for what is abstract and elaborate? If, then, through God's assistance, I have succeeded in supplying to the thoughtful, earnest, inquiring man of business, a manual which shall in any way serve to guide him in the perplexities, animate him in the duties, fortify him against the temptations, and soothe him amidst the trials, of his honourable but arduous career, my purpose is accomplished, and I desire to be thankful.

PENDLETON, *December 30, 1854.*

## PREFACE TO FOURTH EDITION.

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THESE Lectures having been for some time out of print, and a great desire having been expressed in many quarters that a New Edition should be published, they are again offered to the public in a cheaper form.

It is in contemplation to follow them with one or more volumes of miscellaneous Sermons, including those for the sick and afflicted, and a selection of Speeches, Lectures, and Tracts, the whole to form a uniform series.

T. A. S.

*Christ Church Rectory, Salford.*

*June 11th. 1872.*

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## LECTURE I.

### NEHEMIAH'S MASTER PRINCIPLE.

'But so did not I, because of the fear of God.'—NEH. v. 15.

THE religion of the Bible is not a sickly plant which requires the forcing-house to keep it alive. It is a hardy tree which flourishes best in the open field. The servant of God anywhere is the servant of God everywhere. Few notions have done more mischief than the imagination that godliness belongs to the closet and the sanctuary, the cloister and the cell; that it is a thing of sabbaths and sacraments, of forms and creeds; that it is too ethereal to be interfused into the occupations of secular life. How fond the fancy! For what a man *is* in his Counting-house, or on the Exchange, in the midst of his mercantile pursuits—*that* he is in the house of prayer, in the closet of devotion—in the sight of Him who will judge him at the last day. How unscriptural, therefore, the sentiment, so current in the world, 'Religion is well in its place, but has nothing to do with the warehouse or the workshop—with the senate or the cabinet!' On the same false assumption, many men of business will affirm that it is impossible to carry out the principles of the gospel in the details of commercial life. They look upon religion as a garment which may be put on and off as occasion requires, not as the divine weft on which the whole warp of character is to be woven.

To refute such fallacies, and dispel such illusions, there is no more effectual means than holy example. For example,



whilst it shows what can be done, at the same time points out the way in which it may be accomplished. It teaches whilst it stimulates, and whilst it encourages it directs. At the same time, example, that it may be powerful, must be pertinent—it must come home to the consciences and the circumstances of those whom it is to influence. Hence, the force of an example will greatly depend on the relation which it bears to the persons whom it is intended to affect. For this reason, of all the examples which Holy Scripture exhibits—and it is rich in them, as the midnight sky is in the stars which gem its bosom—there is none more appropriate for men occupied in the busy pursuits of the world, harassed by its perplexities, beset by its entanglements, and exposed to its pollutions, than that of Nehemiah, the son of Hachaliah, one of the children of the Captivity in Babylon. In his early life, elevated by the providence of God to an office of high trust and distinction in the service of the king of Assyria, being appointed his cupbearer, and as a consequence surrounded by the seductions and in contact with the defilements of an idolatrous court; afterwards led of God to repair to Jerusalem for the purpose of rousing and succouring the remnant of His people to restore the desolated walls of the holy city; subsequently occupied in governing and establishing those whom he had rallied and organised; at one time, harassed by insidious and insulting foes, at another, embarrassed by the misconduct of his own subjects; now redressing grievances, now rectifying abuses—through all, and in all, he still demeaned himself as became a child of the Most High, and ‘served his own generation according to the will of God.’ Bearing adversity with fortitude and prosperity with soberness, he showed how a man may embellish with the beauty of holiness every situation in life, and pass through vicissitudes of his career so as to be true to his principles and faithful in his stewardship.

Behold, then, ye that are busied in the occupations of the

world, who have to fulfil your part on the perilous stage of public life—behold a beautiful study for you! Copy this model through the help of the Spirit, and you will attain to that noble character—the character of a godly man of business; of one who uses the world as not abusing it—making merchandise for heaven in the commerce of earth.

It is with a special view to your instruction and admonition that I propose addressing to my flock a series of lectures on the character of Nehemiah. God Almighty grant that my labour of love may be overruled to the advancement of His glory, and to the furtherance of your edification!

Motives make the man. What the mainspring is to a piece of mechanism, that the master principle is to the life. What you are in your heart towards God, that you are in your character towards man, as estimated by Him with whom we have to do. If your eye be single, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye be evil, your whole body will be full of darkness. The vital question in character is, therefore—What sways the inner man? If that be wrong, it vitiates the whole; if that be right, God will have respect to His servant, even though there should be much of error in judgment, and of infirmity in conduct. The intention is the action, the principle the practice, in the eyes of Him who ‘desireth truth in the inward parts.’

In analysing the character of Nehemiah we must therefore begin by ascertaining the ruling motive of his heart. Nor can we be at any loss to determine the point. The mainspring of his life discovered itself perpetually throughout his career. The whole tenor of his conversation bespoke the supremacy of the fear of God in his soul. In the chapter, to a portion of which you have just hearkened, this transcendent principle of his soul appears in bold and impressive exercise.

Of those who had returned from the Captivity many were destitute and distressed. Their poverty made them a prey to their richer brethren, who took usurious advantage of their exigencies. Neither had the governors who preceded Nehemiah treated them with consideration, for they had exacted their dues to the utmost, allowing their very servants to bear rule over the people. Not, perhaps, that they had demanded more than they could legally claim, but they had failed to let mercy temper authority. The conduct of Nehemiah stood out in glorious contrast to that of his predecessors; 'for,' says he, 'so did not I.' Far from oppressing his brethren, he did not even require his dues; his own rights were forgotten in their privations. Noble disinterestedness! Yet had he stopped here—had he not disclosed the principle which actuated him—we might have filled up the blank in this wise: 'Because of the promptings of generosity; or because of my high sense of honour; or because of the patriotism which fired my breast; or because of the compassion which melted my heart.' But had any one of these been the commanding motive of his behaviour, though his actions would have been the same, their moral quality would have been utterly changed. They would have been at once lowered into mere manifestations of natural virtue—flowers of the desert, instead of flowers of Paradise, wild olive-berries, fair to the sight but sour to the taste, instead of fruits of grace from the tree of life. Thus, however, felt not, and thus spake not, this holy man. 'So,' says he, 'did not I—because of the fear of God.' This gave the character of godliness to his conduct; this transmuted what would otherwise have been no better than fair tinsel, into the fine gold of the sanctuary. The flesh can exhibit the former, the Spirit alone can create the latter.

Such, then, was the governing principle of the son of Hachaliah; and we shall see it discovering itself more and more as we pursue the illustration of his history.

My present purpose is to enlarge on the motive itself—its nature, and the efficacy and universality of its operation.

The fear of God in the Old Testament is equivalent to the love of God in the New. There is, indeed, little distinction between the expressions; yet if the general use of the former under the old, and of the latter under the new dispensation has any special significance, it indicates the severer aspect of the one economy as compared with the more gracious aspect of the other. The saint of the Old Testament had more of awe—the saint of the New Testament has more of confidence, in the service of God. This confidence, however, is chastened by reverence; whilst that awe was softened by affection. The one, no less than the other, is the gift of grace. Both are the fruit of promise. ‘I will put My fear into their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me,’ is the tenor of the ancient covenant. Utterly apart is this fear from that servile dread which sometimes scares and goads the wicked, or that terror, ending in despair, which worketh death. It is a filial fear, springing out of attachment, not aversion; a fear which has in it the comfort of the Holy Ghost; a fear which grows out of faith, justifying faith in Christ Jesus; a fear ever accompanied with a secret satisfaction, an ennobling sense of liberty; a fear which disenthral the mind from the bondage of other masters by making it true to the one sole Master whose service is perfect freedom. What viewed in one light, is love—viewed in another, is godly fear. Love constrains—fear restrains. They are but different aspects of the same principle. If there be genuine love of God, there cannot fail to be a holy fear of offending Him. This fear of the Lord is therefore ‘the beginning of wisdom;’ the guardian of holiness; the seal of adoption.

Would that the power of this principle pervaded the mercantile world! How mighty would be its working!

How much is it needed ! Examine the morals of that world in the light of Scripture ; and, even in our own distinguished land, they will be found fearfully faulty. True, there is much that is honourable and of good report amongst our merchant princes ; true, our country contrasts favourably in its commercial character with other lands, so that Britain enjoys the confidence of the earth as no nation besides enjoys it ; and marvellous is the amount of property consigned to our gigantic traffickers simply on the strength of their honour and integrity ; yet, if you penetrate into the recesses of commerce, you will frequently detect a low and shifting standard of equity—you will discover that a thousand practices are connived at and pass current in business, which, when weighed in the balances of the sanctuary, are found utterly wanting.

Taking the morality of the commercial world at the highest, how much of it is genuine ? What amount of the fear of God enters into its composition ? If men are upright in their dealings merely because they have a selfish conviction that honesty is the best policy, and that fairness will answer better than fraud ; or if they act justly simply from a sense of honour, from a pride which raises them above being guilty of a low and disgraceful transaction ; or if, to ascend higher in the scale of unrenewed virtue, they do right because they instinctively recoil from all that is base and equivocal, from whatever would degrade or disturb their mind ; then all their imposing array of mercantile virtues, however lovely in the eyes of men, who can look only at the outward appearance, however meriting the meed of human admiration and praise, are, after all, of the earth, earthly ; hollow at the core, unprofitable in the sight of God. The stamp of such coin is the stamp of the world ; the stamp on the coin which will be current in heaven is the image and superscription of the King of kings. However, therefore, our merchants may plume themselves on their mercantile char-

acter, their punctuality in their promises, and their exactitude in their engagements; yet if, in all this, they are only offering sacrifice to self as their idol; if their highest aim is to maintain their own unblemished reputation, or their own uncompromised self-respect; and if, in all, they have no eye to the record on high, to their Master in heaven—then it must be said of them, in the face of all their excellency, and notwithstanding their name and fame amongst their fellows, that they *have* their reward; that in the sight of God they are no better than painted sepulchres, or trees whose fruits, whilst fair to look upon, only need to be grasped, in order that, like the fabled apples of Sodom, they may be crushed to ashes. Respecting their virtues, as respecting the offerings of Israel in ancient times, God may indignantly ask, ‘Did ye them at all unto Me, even unto Me? saith the Lord.’

Tried by this touchstone, the morality of many who stand highest in the commercial world would prove but shining dross; and if they are buoying themselves up with the notion that what man has approved God will not condemn, how frightful the disappointment, how crushing the confusion which must await them in the day ‘when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed!’ Yet ‘why, even of themselves, do they not judge that which is right?’ for they cannot deny that what is not done unto God must be done unto some other master; and that such other master must be an idol and a usurper, because he occupies the temple and the throne of their Creator and Redeemer. What, then, are their secular virtues but splendid idolatries, specious acts of disloyalty to God? Do not these very persons condemn themselves? Do they not betray the partiality and earthliness of their morality? For whilst they are so scrupulous about defrauding men, how unscrupulously will they rob God—rob Him of the devotions of the closet, rob Him of the services of the Sabbath, rob Him of the ordinances of the

sanctuary, rob Him of the homage of the heart? They 'render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's;' whilst they withhold from 'God the things that are God's.' Their very religion is human. 'Their fear towards God is taught by the precept of man.' They try to keep the commandments of the second table of the law so far as the letter goes; but neither in the letter nor in the spirit do they attempt to keep the commandments of the first. Thus by their conduct they show that they look upon the duties which relate directly to God as far less binding than those which relate more immediately to man; and that they conceive that, whilst they would incur heavy blame by violating the former, they may with impunity set the latter at nought. Can such *ungodly* morality be mistaken for holiness? Can it be imagined that faithfulness towards man will be accepted as a substitute for loyalty towards God? Is it to be endured that men should recognise the claims of justice, of gratitude, and of fidelity towards their fellows, yet turn a deaf ear and a faithless heart towards the claims of their Creator, Preserver, Redeemer, and Judge? The very fact that they thus acknowledge human ties, whilst they disregard those which are divine, serves to make their guilt the more palpable, if it will not serve to enhance their condemnation. How much, therefore, is it to be feared that many who stand high in credit and confidence here, will hereafter be overwhelmed with shame when they see the books opened, and find when too late that they are bankrupt for eternity? What will they answer when God rises to judgment—what will they say when He shall arraign them?

As it is the fear of God alone which can impart to mercantile morality intrinsic worth, so it is that principle only that can insure to it strength, stability, and universality. Even the virtuous qualities which exalt a man in the commercial world must lack reality and consistency when they rest on a lower ground than holy fear. Hence, it is no

uncommon thing to find a man who was at one period distinguished for his honour and integrity, at another period of his life making utter shipwreck of character : whilst his barque glided along in smooth water, and his sails were filled with prosperous gales, he steered an undeviating course ; but when storms arose, and surges swelled, and his vessel drifted amidst quicksands and shallows, he speedily abandoned the compass of honesty, and yielded himself to the force of the current. Men are astonished at the change. There is little need for astonishment. His rectitude was the creature of circumstance ; sustained by success, with success it fell. In truth, the man is not greatly altered ; his altered condition has simply called out what was latent in his breast. Fragile at best are the virtues which spring from the unregenerated heart.

Whatever the moral excellencies which adorned a man before the fear of God was implanted in his breast, that fear will give them a reality and a worth which nothing else can give them. What was before done at random, from mere impulse, or to serve some temporary purpose, will afterwards be done from principle, on system, and with the noblest end in view. Whatsoever things he did aforetime that were lovely and of good report, will not only be still done, but done far more effectually than aforetime, because they will be done from his heart : his outward conduct will be the reflection of his inward nature. But, above all, the matchless energy of this principle will exert a strength and universality of influence which nothing else can command. God being everywhere, the man who fears Him will fear Him everywhere. With holy awe he will exclaim, ‘ O Lord, Thou hast searched me and known me. Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine uprising ; Thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path, and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, Thou knowest it altogether.’ Can he



then forget that there is an eye which discerns every feeling as well as every act, and an ear which hearkens to the unspoken thought? Such faith will constrain him to 'be in the fear of the Lord all the day long;' and so, whether he eats or drinks, or whatsoever he does, to do all to the glory of God. Indeed it is impossible to delineate fully the breadth and expansiveness of this principle of action. It will go with a man into the little as well as into the great, into the hidden as well as into the open; it will tell upon him with equal force whether others dissent from or concur in his course of conduct; whether he swim with the stream or breast the current. It will elevate him to an independence of character, as simple as it is sublime: he will no longer resemble the sundial, useless save in the light; he will be like the time-piece, which keeps the tenor of its way alike in the shade as in the sunshine. How calmly can he look down upon the trifles which toss to and fro, agitate or transport, the vassals of the world—the 'men of the world, who have their portion in this world,' who are carried about by its currents, as straws are whirled in the eddies of the stream down which they are borne! It is not so with him who is actuated by the fear of God. His helm is ever set to one point, his prow ever turned towards the haven of salvation. Instead of many masters, one is his master. Instead of many ends, one is his aim. He may fluctuate through infirmity; sinister influences may for a season act upon him; but the ruling principle will still abide. So the needle, shaken by the vibrations of the vessel, may oscillate for a time, yet, true to its magnetic property, it will still tremblingly turn to the pole. The saint, like the sun-flower, owns the centre of attraction when clouded as well as when clear.

How salutary and how separative the restraining power of this principle! It will keep a man undefiled amid the defilements of public life, like the pure stream that is said to pass through the salt lake and yet retain its freshness.

Young men ! just launching forth into the perils of the mercantile world, here is your safeguard. You will find much in the tone, the spirit, and the practices of business which will at first startle and distress you ; you will shrink from many of the expedients, manœuvres, and subterfuges of trade. But there will be great danger lest you should become familiarised with such things—lest they should benumb the tenderness of your conscience, and lower your standard of moral judgment. You will be tempted to think that you must do as others do, or else fail of success ; that to be a clever man of business you must not be too nice and scrupulous ; and that if you only fall in with the usages of the establishment in which you may be employed, the responsibility will rest with the principal rather than with the servant. You will be tempted to argue, If my employer bid, or at least prompt, me to misrepresent and equivocate in his service—if he wish me to beat down the seller and overcharge the buyer—to take advantage of the weak and the poor because of *his* strength and capital, and *their* poverty and weakness—must I not obey him ? Will the fault be mine ?—must I not succumb to his authority ? No, young man, you have a Master in heaven ; ‘let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread !’ ‘How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God ?’ exclaimed the Hebrew youth of old, when sin, clothed in the specious guise of authority, would have seduced him. Be your watchword the same. Fear, that you may not fear. Fear God, that you may not fear man. Be it your resolve—whatever doubtful things others may do, even some who stand high on ‘Change, yea, even some who pass for professors of godliness—‘yet so will not I do, because of the fear of God.’ No human name can endorse what God has dishonoured—no human authority make that right which He has pronounced to be wrong. ‘What saith the Lord ?’—not ‘What saith the world ?’—is the decisive question.

Mark the efficacy of the same principle in fortifying against temptation in another form. There are few things about which a commercial man is so sensitive as his reputation for tact and sagacity; but he will find that to take advantage of others, if only it be done cleverly and without detection, is deemed by many a mark of skill and shrewdness. To the life did the Holy Ghost portray the spirit of the present day when he thus portrayed the spirit of ancient times—‘It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer; but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth.’ How often do our buyers strive to cheapen the articles for which they treat beyond what they know to be fair, and, when they have gained their point, they straightway congratulate themselves, and boast of their superior business talent! Nor will the world disallow their boasting. They will probably win a name for dexterity and cleverness in trade; their services will command a high price in the market; and as for their integrity, it will be esteemed as of secondary importance to their talent. They can get on; they can make a good bargain—that is the cardinal point. Here, therefore, is an ordeal for a godly tradesman. To be reputed soft and behind the age, because he dare not overreach his neighbour, will tend to stagger his pride and test his principle. He must endure to be accounted a fool, and to be pitied as too scrupulous for success. He must esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of earth. When he sees competitors prospering by doubtful expedients, or hears them glorying in their equivocal gains, his reflection and his joy will be—‘So did not I, because of the fear of God.’

As from the unrighteous expedients, so from the unhalloed indulgences of the child of this world, will the fear of God restrain the child of light. He will not ask what is pleasant, what is customary, what is fashionable—but what is right. He is constrained to come out from the course of this world, and to be separate, that he may not touch the

unclean thing. His ambition is to be one of the 'peculiar people, who are zealous of good works.' Peculiarity is essential to Christianity; not an affected peculiarity, not the mask which designing men put on for the purpose of deceiving—but that honest, artless peculiarity which springs from fearing God rather than man. Alas! that this should be *peculiar*—even in the so-called Christian world.

Therefore, brethren, 'if sinners entice you, consent ye not.' 'Choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.' You may be branded as unsocial, precise; but, in reply to all such charges, suffice it for you to answer, 'so dare not, and so do not I, because of the fear of God.'

No less cogent will be the influence of this motive in guarding you against desecration or profanation of the ordinances and of the day of God. Worldly people think that if they frequent the sanctuary in the morning, the rest of the Sabbath may be spent in sloth, recreation, or business. The newspaper or the ledger, the feast or the excursion, occupies the principal portion of the day. Yea, and the very courts of the Lord's house are defiled by their buying and selling in thought and desire; for their heart goeth after their covetousness, whilst their knees are bent in worship. Here, again, Divine fear will be to you as a wall of fire to set you apart from the course of this world: you will abide faithful amid the faithless, scrupulous amid the licentious, devout amid the irreverent—'because of the fear of God.'

Glorious liberty of the sons of God! Free to do every thing but sin—they are therefore free indeed! Bound by one silken tie, they are disencumbered from a thousand chains. He is the freeman who is free to serve God. He is the slave who is not at liberty to serve Him whose service is perfect freedom. There is a yoke in that service, but it is easy—a burden, but it is light. 'His commandments

are not grievous ; His ways are ways of pleasantness.' He is a Master full of grace, full of pity, full of tenderness. He never forsakes those who fear Him. 'He pitieth them as a father pitieth his children.' 'He spareth them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.' He will give them the first-fruits of heaven. 'The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him.' 'Walking in the fear of God, they walk in the comfort of the Holy Ghost.' Their fear hath no torment, and their submission no servility.

Such and so excellent was the master principle of this illustrious servant of God. We shall trace its mighty working again and again as we proceed with the illustration of his character ; we shall see it, now emboldening him for conflict, now stimulating him to duty, now restraining him from temptation, now upholding him under difficulties, now humbling him in the dust, now lifting him up above 'the fear of man, which bringeth a snare.'

Men and brethren, look, I pray you, into your own hearts and see if this sovereign motive be reigning there. Too many will find it hard to discover what holds the supremacy within them ; so manifold, capricious, and conflicting, are the impulses which sway them, that they resemble the reed shaken with the wind, or the seaweed torn from the rock and tossed to and fro on the weltering waves of the ocean. One thing at least is clear, that if there be no ruling sentiment in your souls, it is not the fear of God. What, then, is the worth of your Christianity ? Of what avail is your creed or your profession ? What part or lot can you have in Christ ? 'Little children, let no man deceive you ; he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous.' Were you justified through His blood, you would be governed by His fear. 'Turn ye, then turn ye ; for why will ye die ?' Take with you words, and say unto God—'O Lord, our Lord, other lords beside Thee have had dominion over us ; but by Thee only will we henceforth

make mention of Thy name.' Say not—'The standard set before us is too high for us: we cannot attain to it;—to carry out the fear of God unto all the ramifications of commercial life, is simply impossible.' 'With man it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible.' 'If, therefore, thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.' Ask the holiest and most consistent merchant you know what is the secret of his excellency, and he will answer, 'By the grace of God, I am whatsoever I am.' The same grace is sufficient for you. The same grace may through Christ be yours. If you name the Name of Christ, see that you depart from iniquity. Never give occasion to the men of the world to say, 'These godly men pray in the closet, bow down in the sanctuary, shine in the saintly circle; but they can cheat, deceive, and overreach like other men, when they come down into the secularities of earth.' Woe to that man by whom such an offence cometh. He is a practical libel on Christianity; his profession is a snare, and his confidence like the spider's web.

But blessed are ye who 'adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things,' 'who are in the fear of the Lord all the day long;' 'ye are epistles of Christ, known and read of all men.' Those who have to do with you take knowledge of you that you have been with Jesus. 'Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.'

And now, beloved, 'my heart's desire and prayer to God for you' all is, that through the power of His Spirit, His holy fear may so rule in your hearts, and so embody itself in your lives, as to carry you through all temptations, and keep you blameless amidst all corruptions, till you reach the happy land, where perils, adversities, and perplexity will be no more, and where the fear of God will be swallowed up in the fulness of His love. Amen.

## LECTURE II.

### NEHEMIAH'S SECRET STRENGTH.

'Now, therefore, O God, strengthen my hands.'—NEH. vi. 9.

It is not life that we see in the living ; it is the manifestation of life. Hidden in its essence, the vital principle is apparent in its effects. The soul can reveal its powers in a look, in a word, in an action ; but the soul itself eludes discovery. Even lower life lies concealed. The life of the tree discloses itself in the tender bud, in the fair blossom, in the ripe fruit ; but who can detect the secret spring of all ?

If it be thus with natural life, much more must mystery envelope the life of God in the souls of His saints. The Holy Ghost thus describes that life, 'Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.' Evident in result, effectual in operation, fruitful in blessing, it yet remains a mystery which the world cannot conceive, and which the believer himself cannot comprehend. 'The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth : so is every one that is born of the Spirit'—and so is every one that lives in the Spirit. The action is human, but the energy is divine. No mechanism, however perfect, can dispense with a motive power ; it is needed both to put it into action, and to keep it in play after it has been put in motion. So with the graces and faculties of the inner man, 'the hidden man of the heart ;'

they have neither originated nor quickened themselves, neither can they act of their own innate energy. The excellency of the power is *of* Christ, and *in* Christ. 'Without Me,' saith he, 'ye can do nothing.' The history of the believer's spiritual life is, 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.' Even the master motive is not the spring of action; it is the effect of that spring. Just as it is with the mighty wheel which moves the whole machinery of the factory, it appears as though the impulse it imparts were all its own; but in reality there is a latent power by which that wheel itself is moved, and without which it cannot act.

We led you last Sunday evening to contemplate the master principle in the life of faith; we traced its potency—how it restrains from sin; how it constrains to holiness; we enlarged upon its excellency—how it elevates a man above the fear of his fellows, how it gives him a majestic liberty, 'how it brings every imagination of the thoughts of his heart into captivity to the obedience of Christ.' But this principle is not self-acting; as it did not create, so neither can it sustain itself. Whilst in one view the saint is an agent, in another view he is a subject; he only wills and does as God works in him to will and to do of His good pleasure.

We purpose this evening, in pursuing our illustrations of the character of Nehemiah as a study for men of business, to explore the fountain of that strength which was made perfect in his weakness—that strength which upheld him in all his trials, capacitated him for all his duties, and made him more than conqueror over all his enemies. We find the secret of his might revealed in that simple aspiration to which you have just lent an ear. Nehemiah had come up from Babylon to restore the ruined walls of Jerusalem; he had inspirited the feeble few who had returned from the captivity, to resume the work. Animated by his spirit and



guided by his wisdom, the enterprise prospered in their hands; but no sooner had the enemies of God and His people heard tidings that the walls of the city were rising, than they were filled with vexation and envy, and conspired together to arrest the progress of the work. 'When Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Amalekites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, and that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth.' They therefore strove, first, by open threats, to crush the undertaking; but, finding these fail, they had resource to stratagem, and rumoured it abroad that Nehemiah was setting himself up as a rival to the king, his master. They hoped thus to intimidate him and to weaken the hands of his people, so that they should cease from the work out of apprehension of the consequences of those rumours should they come to the ears of the king. Then it was that this soldier of the cross, in the face of all his adversaries, instead of confiding in the precautions which he had adopted, in the watch which he had set, or in the weapons which they wielded, simply lifted up his heart to heaven and prayed, 'Now, therefore, O God, strengthen my hands.'

Throughout his eventful history you will find the same spirit characterising this holy man; you will find that in every measure which he undertook, in every danger to which he was exposed, and in the face of every temptation which assailed him, he had recourse to the strength of God. He walked in humility. The habitual attitude of his soul was an attitude of dependence. In all things he leaned upon the arm of Omnipotence. This was the secret of his strength. And so will it be with all that serve God in truth. None can serve Him truly, save those who serve Him in His own strength.

We therefore invite you to contemplate the godly man of business as in the midst of all his occupations, whether secular or spiritual, distrusting and renouncing his own

strength, and recognising and relying on the strength of his Saviour—laying hold on that strength continually by the hand of prayer. God grant to us the presence and power of His Spirit, that we may be strengthened with might in the inner man, through the instruction of His holy Word!

Human power depends largely on human confidence. The man possessed of a certain iron inflexibility of purpose, based on a proud self-reliance, is the man who ordinarily accomplishes great things in the affairs of earth. Marvellous is the mastery of such a will over weaker and inferior wills. So that for a man whose highest aim is present success, there cannot be a better rule than, 'Rely upon yourself; have confidence in your own judgment; never despair of your own efforts.' God often allows men of this character to succeed. They have their reward. In self they have confided, and to self they give the praise. But the very converse holds in relation to the strength of those who live not to themselves but to the Lord, who live not the life of sense but the life of faith. Just in proportion as they distrust themselves, abandon self, and abide in Christ, just in such proportion will His strength be made perfect in their weakness, and will they 'be more than conquerors through Him that loved them.' The curse of man is, that he makes flesh his arm—that he has lost his trust in the living God. How intense this idolatrous tendency, this suicidal fatuity, in the heart of man! So intense, that men naturally confide in anything or everything rather than in Him in whom they 'live, and move, and have their being.' A virtual atheism is practically the state of all who have not been born again of the Spirit. 'God is not in all their thoughts;' they plan without consulting Him, labour without leaning upon Him, prosper without acknowledging Him. Man must be brought off from this self-dependence, before he can be brought into that dependence on God which is the law of his nature, and

the condition of his perfection. By trusting to the creature he fell from his Creator ; by renouncing faith in the creature he returns to his Creator. To reduce him to despair of his own power is a task so difficult that God alone can bring it to pass. Men will more easily admit that they have done wrong, that they are guilty before God, than that they cannot return of themselves to the Lord, that they have no power of themselves to help themselves. This is an admission which their pride cannot brook. So prevalent indeed is the notion of self-sufficiency, that most men intend to 'turn to God and prepare for eternity at some future period. It never occurs to them to misgive their ability to do so whenever they shall please. Strange, that they should be deaf alike to the testimony of Scripture and to the lessons of experience on the subject of man's spiritual impotency ! Hearken to the voice of the lively oracles : ' Without Me,' says Christ, ' ye can do nothing.' ' We are not sufficient of ourselves,' says St. Paul, ' to think anything as of ourselves.' ' I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.' ' When we were without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.' And clear as is the witness of Scripture on this point, no less clear is the confession of every orthodox branch of the Christian Church. Our own Church is most explicit. In her tenth Article she says : ' The condition of man since the fall of Adam is such that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith and calling upon God. Wherefore we have no power to do good works, pleasant and acceptable unto God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us when we have that good will.' The work of Christ *for* us was not more indispensable to our salvation than is the work of Christ *in* us. If we are justified wholly by His merit, we are sanctified absolutely by His grace.

The evidence of experience fully sustains the testimony

of Scripture. Let any man in his own strength set about becoming what he feels he ought to be ; let him strive to be perfectly upright in all his thoughts and intentions, perfectly accurate in all his words, perfectly kind and charitable in all his feelings, perfectly submissive and devout in all his sentiments towards God. Let him make a conscience of everything within him as well as without him—of the issues of his heart, no less than of the streams of his life ; let him struggle to make himself love God with all his heart, soul, and strength, and to love his neighbour as himself ; let him do all this with ever so much honesty of purpose and determination of spirit—and what will be the inevitable result ? He will discover more and more painfully the depth of his impotency and the abortiveness of his efforts. Nay, more—he will find that his inherent corruptions gather intensity from the very resistance which he opposes to them ; as the current chafes against the barrier which interrupts, but cannot check its course.

A man may, indeed, by his own power, greatly control his external conduct : he may cease to be a drunkard, or he may abstain from impure indulgences ; but without Christ he can do nothing in the spiritual life—he cannot give birth to a holy desire, or a good counsel, or a just work. Mere morality, what is visible to man, can grow on the stem of nature ; but ‘the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the praise and glory of God’—these can be borne only by the tree of grace.

Hence it happens that you will frequently find a man gifted with uncommon resolution in the things of this life, who is yet like a straw tossed in the eddies of a stream in relation to the things of God. In the world, a rock ; in the Church, ‘a wave of the sea tossed of the wind, and driven.’ What energy in natural things will the same individual sometimes display who in spiritual things is the slave of passion and the sport of caprice—led captive at his will by

‘the Prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience!’ How mournfully manifest, then, that a moral paralysis has passed upon the spiritual powers of man! How essential that a living consciousness of this fact should accompany the soldier of the cross throughout his holy warfare! If he live in the Spirit, he must also walk in the Spirit. Whilst in the wilderness, he must still be a pilgrim of faith, a tottering child held up by an Almighty hand. The abiding sense of his weakness will keep him hanging upon Christ. ‘When I am weak,’ said one who had made the highest attainments in the divine life; ‘when I am weak’—in the deep experimental consciousness of my own weakness—‘then am I strong—strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.’ What a paradox! What a beautiful paradox! To the Christian, how clear—to the unbeliever, how strange! What a precious peculiarity of the glorious gospel of the blessed God! It makes known to man his real state—a disclosure exceedingly startling, distasteful, humiliating to him; but it does not stop there. If it reveals to us our guilt, it is that it may reveal to us our righteousness; if it discovers to us our disease, it is that it may discover to us our remedy; if it convinces us of our impotency, it is that it may lead us to our strength. Here is the crowning glory of Christianity. Philosophy knew nothing of these heavenly secrets. She could exhibit our desolation; and bitter often, and unsparing were her strictures on the foibles and the follies, the miseries and the incongruities, of human nature; but whilst she could expose the malady, she could not make known the remedy. She could laugh at our helplessness, but she could tell us of no succour. She could paint the beauty of virtue, but she could not enable us to attain it. She could supply the lovely model, but it only served to mock our attempts to copy its perfections. She dealt with us as Pharaoh dealt with the children of Israel; he bade them make bricks, but he gave them no straw. So philo-

sophy bade man fear God, be devout, upright, benevolent, truthful, rise to the dignity of his nature, and seek his heritage above ; but she spake to a paralytic that could not move—to a corpse that could not hear.

Christ commands the palsied to arise and walk, but He, at the same time, imparts the power to obey the command ; He calls upon the man with the withered hand to stretch it forth, and, in making the effort, the man is healed. The word of Christ gives us the fullest assurance that His aid shall not be wanting to the faithful. It calls Him by the glorious name—‘The Strength of Israel.’ It declares, that ‘surely, shall one say, In the Lord have I strength.’ It affirms, that ‘the Lord will give strength to His people.’ Therefore shall each one of them resolve, ‘I will go in the strength of the Lord God, and will make mention of Thy righteousness, even of Thine only.’ Absolute dependence on the righteousness of God for justification must be accompanied with no less absolute dependence on the strength of God for sanctification. ‘Whatsoever we do in word or deed, we must do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.’ Fellowship with Him is the life of our life. It pleases God that we should be continually reminded of our union with His Son. He would not have us forget Him for a single hour. He therefore gives us spiritual strength as He gives us natural life, day by day, and hour by hour. He gives us no stock in hand. He does not lodge it in ourselves ; He retains it in Himself, for us. He lives and walks ‘in us,’ that we may live and walk through Him. He works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure. He does not will and do for us, nor does He act *on us* as on passive subjects ; but He works *in us* as rational and responsible agents. We will and do ; but it is because He works in us to will and to do. In one view all is His work, in another all is ours ; His through us, and ours by Him. So that, when we have done all, our language must be that of the apostle, ‘By grace I am what

I am.' 'I laboured more abundantly than they all ; yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.' In the least as well as in the greatest, in the secular as well as in the spiritual, concerns of the faithful, it is not less their duty than it is their privilege to strengthen themselves in the Lord. He loves that they should have recourse to Him. They cannot urge a more prevailing plea than that which the King of Israel used when confronting an overwhelming army, 'Help us, O Lord our God, for we trust in Thee!' To such an argument He cannot turn a deaf ear. 'According to thy faith be it unto thee.' 'If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth,' will infallibly be the answer. How true, then, and touching as true, the picture drawn of himself as a pilgrim of faith by the sweet singer of Israel—'My soul hangeth upon Thee ; Thy right hand upholdeth me!' The figure he employs brings before us the endearing sight of a father with his little faltering child. The father is leading the child along a dark and rugged way ; the child clings fondly to the father's hand, urged alike by the consciousness of its own feebleness and by its confidence in him. And that very weakness so felt, and that very confidence so reposed, prove with the father, though a silent, a most pathetic plea. How can he refuse the gentle grasp of the tiny hand which is locked in his ? Its weakness is irresistible. Even so is it with the child of God. His Father holds his hand, and he in consequence holds his Father's hand. The more firmly he is held, the more firmly will he cling to Him who holds him ; and that very clinging constrains the Almighty. Omnipotent in everything else, He is, so to speak, impotent here ; He cannot resist the touching confidingness of a helpless soul. The great point is to carry this dependence everywhere, and into everything ; into commerce as well as communion, into the counting-house as well as into the closet. How difficult, yet how vital a lesson for the servant of God to learn ! We

must not only ask strength from on high, but we must use the strength for which we ask. This must be done by the immediate exercise of faith even whilst we are busied in the unbelieving world, even whilst we are mingling of necessity in scenes of sore temptation. Then, when most in danger, we stand most in need of succour; when most surrounded by our enemies, we most require the outstretched arm of God. Our very foes should be our sentinels, and warn us to fly for refuge to the help, as well as to the hope, set before us in Christ. As we ought to be 'in the fear of God,' so ought we to be in the strength of God, 'all the day long.' The former is effectual only as it is accompanied by the latter. What is done in our own strength is of the flesh, and what is of the flesh cannot please God. How often does it happen that Christian men are led astray, embarrassed by temptation, entangled in false positions, betrayed into giving occasion to the adversary to rail and the weak to stumble, because they set about things in their own name—in their own wisdom—in their own might! Had they set the Lord before them, they would not have been moved; had they honoured Him, He would have honoured them.

Mercantile men! mark, I pray you, the watchfulness of Nehemiah; how in the face of taunting foes, in emergencies however sudden, in perplexities, however harassing, he turned for succour to his God. This, of all the features in his character, is the most distinctive; this, the one it most concerns you to transcribe. Like the mystic lock of Samson, this is the symbol of your power; shorn of it, you are weaker than the bulrush in the gale. Whence is it that you have sometimes been so appalled at the sneer of the ungodly, so warped by the maxims of a world lying in wickedness, so seduced into petty compliances with some of the doubtful usages of trade?—Is it not because you failed to realise the presence of God, to call in the aid of Omnipotence, to set your back against the Rock of ages? Had



you done so, the fear of man would have vanished before the fear of God ; you would have asked, not what was gainful, but what was godly ; you would have felt yourselves to be invincible ; for the conflict would no more have been yours, but the Lord's, and His controversy must be triumphant. 'Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do,' ye are to 'do all to the glory of God.' But to do all to His glory, you must do all *by* His grace. Never deem any duty too light to need that grace, or too arduous to be practicable through its succour. 'As thy days, thy strength shall be.' 'He giveth power to the faint ; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall ; but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength : they shall mount up with wings as eagles : they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint.' Thus, beloved, recruit your vigour continually. Then sorrows will not overwhelm you, temptations will not overcome you, Satan will not be able to baffle, nor the world to ensnare you. 'I can do all things,' said the noblest soldier of the cross ; 'I can do all things through Christ, that strengtheneth me.' 'I can do all things'—strange language from the lips of a worm of the dust !—'through Christ, that strengtheneth me,'—the paradox is solved—how seemly, how graceful the words from the tongue of a lowly believer ! Left to himself, 'the grasshopper is a burden' to him ; Omnipotence enabling him, he can 'thresh the mountains.'

And does this derivation of power seem strange—does it appear to make the saint a mere machine ? I tell you no. The whole universe is in some sense a machine ; there is no power but of God. We talk of the laws of nature, of the forces which keep planets revolving in their spheres—but, after all, how are those laws maintained ? how are those forces actuated ? It is God that 'worketh all in all.' 'He upholdeth all things by the Word of His power.' In Him all

being centres. From the worm that crawls the dust up to Gabriel, the highest archangel before the throne of God, none has independent life, independent strength, independent holiness, or independent happiness. All is *in* God—as all is *from* God. Why, then, should it be thought a thing incredible that ‘man that is born of a woman’—man, who is shorn through his fall of all primitive purity and all spiritual power, that man should be utterly dependent from first to last for the highest life, the life of the Spirit, on the Spirit of ‘the living God.’ And is it not meet and right that he should ever realise his dependency and be taught to wait perpetually on the fountain of life?

The channel through which the living water flows into the soul will, if the Lord permit, form the subject of the next lecture in our course.

And now, brethren, suffer the word of admonition. Beware of self-confidence. ‘He that trusteth his own heart is a fool.’ God resisteth such an one. ‘The rich He sendeth empty away.’ In vain your virtues, your purposes, your efforts, whilst self is their staple. Till that idol is abandoned, not a heavenward step is taken. If the ship, however rigged, equipped, and manned, cannot move across the waters of herself, but must have the winds to waft her, how much less can the shattered barque of the human soul win its way through the tempestuous ocean of life to the haven of salvation except it be borne along by the breath of the Spirit! But the sails must be spread to invite and catch the heavenly gale.

Oh! then, be fools that you may be wise; be impotent that you may be mighty; crucify self that you may live through Christ. The first lesson to be learned in the way of life is how guilty, how dead, how blind, how wretched, how miserable, how helpless, you are in yourselves! When thus empty, you are prepared to be filled; when thus weak, you are prepared to be strengthened; when thus condemned, you are prepared to be forgiven. The Lord teach you this

beginning of the wisdom that cometh from above ! Until you know it, you know nothing yet as you ought to know.

Servants of God ! take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. Remember, that whatever is not done as of the ability which He giveth is unprofitable and sinful. Realise this in the transactions of your calling, as well as in your religious services. Grace is needed to traffic aright, no less than to pray aright. At the same time, see to it that you never fail to own the power that worketh in you. To yourself take only shame—to the Spirit give all the glory. Neither forget, that no work of yours is meet for God, but as presented by Him who is the propitiation for our sins, whose blood must sanctify, and whose merits must incense all our services.

Soldiers of the Cross ! encourage yourselves in the Lord. 'Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.' Despair of no attainment, stagger at no duty, shrink from no danger, to which the Lord calls you. Be sure of His call, and you are sure of His aid. When He assigns you a task, by that very assignment He pledges Himself to enable you to perform it. 'Fear not, only believe.' 'If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.' Yea ; and, beloved, what a blessed thing it is that we are privileged to live this dependent life ! If our strength were in ourselves we might lose it ; but in Christ Jesus it is safe. Our security is in His immutability. We are 'kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation.' He hath said, 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee ;' so that we may boldly say, 'The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.' Nay, verily, for He hath said again, 'My sheep hear My voice, and I know them ; and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand. My Father which gave them Me is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand.'

## LECTURE III.

### NEHEMIAH'S SPIRIT OF DEVOTION.

'So I prayed to the God of heaven.'—NEH. ii. 4.

THE fire on the altar of burnt-sacrifice in the Jewish temple was kindled from heaven. God gave commandment concerning that fire that it should always be burning—it should never go out. The appointed Levites fed and tended it by night and by day. The sacrifices were not always offering up, but the fire was always in readiness to offer them. How apt an emblem of what the renewed heart should be! The fire of its devotion was lighted from on high; it was enkindled by the Spirit of God. That holy fire ought ever to be burning; it ought never to go out. The sacrifices of prayer and praise cannot be always ascending; but the flame of devotion to kindle them, as opportunity may serve, ought never to wax dim.

Of all the habits of the new man there is none more distinctive, none more conducive to his soul's health and happiness, none more essential to his consistency of conduct and beauty of holiness, than this devotional spirit. You will find that it has always distinguished those who have excelled in virtue; and amongst these, none more strikingly than that holy man whose character forms the subject of my present course of instruction. We have examined the mainspring of his holy life—THE FEAR OF GOD; we have traced the secret of his spiritual strength—THE STRENGTH OF GOD MADE PERFECT IN HIS WEAKNESS. We are now to explore

the channel through which the Spirit of Grace was derived into his soul. That channel was unceasing prayer. Throughout his chequered career, not only on stated occasions and in hallowed scenes, but everywhere and under all circumstances—whether in the midst of foes or in the seclusion of the closet—harassed by occupations or under the excitement of dangers—you find him still true to the mercy-seat, still lifting up his heart to God. ‘Think upon me, O my God, for good ;’ ‘O God, strengthen my hands ;’ ‘Think upon me, and have mercy upon me, according to the multitude of Thy mercies’—such were the devout breathings which again and again brake forth from his heart.

But of all the indications of the constancy of intensity of the spirit of supplication in the soul of Nehemiah the most emphatic and pathetic is the one which occurs in the scene now before us.

He was living in affluence and comfort in the palace of the king of Assyria ; he had been raised to an office of no common honour and responsibility, for he was cup-bearer to the king. In the midst of his ease and prosperity, tidings reached him from Jerusalem which filled him with grief. ‘Hanani,’ says he, ‘one of my brethren, came, he and certain men of Judah ; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem. And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach : the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire. And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven ; and said, I beseech Thee, O Lord God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love Him and observe His commandments : let Thine ear now be attentive,

and Thine ears open, that Thou mayest hear the prayer of Thy servant, which I pray before Thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel Thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against Thee : both I and my father's house have sinned. We have dealt very corruptly against Thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which Thou commandest Thy servant Moses. Remember, I beseech Thee, the word that Thou commandest Thy servant Moses, saying, If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations ; but if ye turn unto Me, and keep My commandments, and do them, though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set My name there. Now, these are Thy servants and Thy people, whom Thou hast redeemed by Thy great power, and by Thy strong hand. O Lord, I beseech Thee, let now Thine ear be attentive to the prayer of Thy servant, and to the prayer of Thy servants, who desire to fear Thy name ; and prosper, I pray thee, Thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king's cup-bearer.' Having thus spread his sorrows before the King of kings, he awaited his opportunity to make his appeal to his earthly monarch.

'And it came to pass,' the narrative proceeds, 'in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that wine was before him : and I took up the wine, and gave it to the king.' Meantime the sorrow of his heart appeared in his countenance. 'Now,' continues he, 'I had not been beforetime sad in his presence. Wherefore the king said unto me, Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick ? this is nothing else but sorrow of heart.' 'Then,' he adds, 'I was very sore afraid.' And well he might be, for he served a monarch of the most despotic power, and filled an office regarded with such special jealousy that the slightest

suspicion of treachery on his part would have exposed him to instant execution. Truthfully, however, though tremblingly, he answered, 'Let the king live for ever : why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire? Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request?' An opening was thus given him to present his suit. And, agitated and affrighted as he was, it would have been natural for him to have at once stammered forth his appeal. But mark his irrepressible spirit of devotion! Though not always in the act, he was always in the attitude, of supplication. He was not, therefore, thrown off his guard; he paused—he was silent—and so, says he, 'I prayed to the God of heaven.' Then, having first made known his request to Him in whose hand are the hearts of kings, he next made his petition to his earthly sovereign. Is it possible to conceive of a more expressive evidence of the constancy with which this great man waited upon God than the evidence furnished in this simple incident? It speaks volumes as to the steadiness of the sacred flame which burned within his breast.

Our interesting subject then for this evening is ejaculatory prayer—the habit of lifting up the heart in brief aspirations to God in all places and under all circumstances;—thus hallowing the commonest pursuits of life, and turning the warehouse or the workshop into a house of prayer. God grant to us the spirit of grace and supplication whilst we dwell on this vital theme!

Few have any just conception of the essence of prayer. Very many when they think of praying think of it as necessarily involving a formal kneeling down in the closet or the sanctuary and a presenting our petitions in a set manner to God. This, no doubt, when spiritual is pre-eminently prayer; but if a man never prays anywhere save in the closet, the family, or the temple, there is reason to fear that

he never prays at all. For, if he prayed truly in these consecrated spots he could not repress the silent aspiration that would sometimes gush from his heart in the market-place, in the counting-house, in the social circle, as he sat in his house, and as he walked by the way. If the spirit of genuine devotion animated his stated worship, it could not be inert all the day beside. The sad formality which man has superinduced on the religion of Christ, has tended to foster many unscriptural notions on the subject of devotion. Hence it is that multitudes have thought that they must come out of the world in order to hold communion with God—hence they have sought the cell in the wilderness or the gloom of the cloister that they might spend their days and nights in converse with heaven. But, counteracting God's purpose, they have generally failed of their object, and it is no breach of charity to say that, for the most part, whilst *they* left the world, *the world* did not leave them; and that, in many instances, the monastery and the nunnery, instead of being houses of prayer, were dens of thieves. The religion of Jesus is far too practical to abstract us from the duties of our stations, or from the relationships of social life. Instead of interfering with them, it gives security that they shall be effectually performed; it cheers, sustains, and sanctifies us in their performance. It converts the toils, the cares, the ills of ordinary life into a heavenly discipline; bracing our principles by bringing them into conflict, strengthening our devotion by calling it into exercise. The devout spirit, like the well-strung Eolian harp, not only gives forth sweet sounds when woke by the gentler breathings that steal over its chords, but when vibrating under the ruder blasts that sweep across its strings. You could not have the rule of life more beautifully expressed than it is in the language of the lesson for this evening—'not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.' See to it that this fervency of spirit pervade your secular occupations, and your business will invig-



orate your devotion, whilst your devotion will hallow your business. To be slothful in business will quench devotion as fatally as to pursue business with inordinate affection. The hardest devotion is the healthiest. The devotion of the cloister is for the most part like the ghastly light that hovers over decomposition and decay ; the devotion which characterises the diligent, spiritually-minded man of business, resembles the star which shines on in the storm as in the calm—when the sky is clouded as when it is serene.

It is then utterly a mistake to suppose that except a man bend the knee and use the language of supplication he cannot pray to God. On the contrary, not more beautiful than scriptural are the words of the hymn which we have recently been singing—

‘Prayer is the soul’s sincere desire,  
Unutter’d or express’d ;  
The motion of a hidden fire  
That trembles in the breast.

‘Prayer is the burthen of a sigh,  
The falling of a tear ;  
The upward glancing of an eye,  
When none but God is near.’

To the same effect is the language of our incomparable Liturgy :—‘O God, that despisest not the sighing of a contrite heart, nor the desire of such as be sorrowful.’ The sigh of the penitent is prayer in God’s ear ; the desire of the sorrowful is heard by the Omniscient. Language is necessary to communicate our sentiments and feelings to our fellows ; not so to convey them to Him who knows our thoughts long before we conceive them—‘who knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints, according to the will of God.’ Be assured of it, there may be no praying where there are long prayers—there may be much prayer where not a word is spoken. There are groanings unutterable which the Spirit excites in the heart of the

believer that prevail mightily with God ; whilst the long-spun address of the Pharisee, standing in the synagogue, or at the corners of the street, is loathsome to Him who requireth truth in the inward parts. The more steadily the spirit of prayer burns in any soul, the more surely does it prove that soul to be alive to God. For prayer is to spiritual, what respiration is to natural life. When we cease to breathe, we cease to live ; when we cease to pray, we die in the sight of God. If our breathing be stopped but for a little, what an agony will ensue till we recover its play ! So with the inner man. Let the exercise of prayer be for a season suspended in the devout heart, and there will be an agonizing struggle till communion with God is renewed. ' Whilst I kept silence my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long,' said the Psalmist, when reviewing the dark period in which he had restrained prayer before God.

Where ought we not to pray ? When ought we not to pray ? The ear of God is never shut—the mercy-seat is never remote. It is as near in the warehouse as in the chamber, as accessible in the market-place as in the sanctuary. The arrow from the bow of faith pierces heaven in the twinkling of an eye ; nor through the Mediator does the faintest ejaculation fail of a reply. The prayer of faith never fell to the ground. In the disclosures of eternity it will be found that not a believing desire was ever unfulfilled. Its fulfilment cannot always be discerned at present ; but the answer is not therefore less sure nor less real. Ought we not then ' to pray without ceasing ? ' Ought we not to ' continue instant in prayer ? ' Ought we not to ' pray always,' and pray everywhere ?

Fain would I represent to you as I ought the importance and the privilege of thus incessantly calling upon God. When can it be out of season ?—where can it be out of place ? If a man can find the scene where he needs not serve God, then he will have found the scene where he needs

not pray to God. But wherever a man is bound to do the will, there he is called upon to ask the aid of the Master whom he serves. We cannot carry this principle too far: in spirit we ought to live upon our knees. If in any step we need not divine guidance, if in any work we need not divine strength, if in any enterprise we need not the divine blessing, then in projecting that step, in prosecuting that work, in undertaking that enterprise, we need not pray. But if Christ is all and in all, then always and in all must we call upon His name. And on how many occasions does the servant of God suddenly require special assistance, special counsel, special care! What urgent emergencies will unexpectedly arise! How frequently are men of business called upon to decide summarily on questions big with importance, to make up their judgment at once on measures the issues of which they can neither over-estimate nor foresee! At such critical junctures ought they not to consult Him who knows the end from the beginning, 'whose counsel, it shall stand;' who has said, 'in all thy ways acknowledge Me, and I will direct thy paths?' Yet they cannot enter into their closet; opportunity for this does not serve. What then?—can they not with all the speed of thought refer the case to God?—can they not call in His wisdom to be made perfect in their foolishness? How it will assure the understanding—how it will abate the crushing weight of unshared responsibility, in such wise to take counsel with the Omniscient!

Take a specific illustration. How commonly is the physician forced to form his conclusions in a moment; yea, to form them on uncertain grounds and indeterminate symptoms? Yet a mistaken conclusion may endanger the life of his patient. Now if, in such circumstances, the medical man rely simply on his own skill, and confer only with his own judgment, to the neglect of calling in the wisdom and blessing of the Almighty, what a fearful risk and burden

does he bring upon himself! But let his heart breathe forth the aspiration to God—‘Lord, direct me; Lord, I commit this case to Thee—prosper me according to Thy mercy!’ Will he not then, having cast his burden on the Lord, having invoked unerring skill, be able to act with faith and nerve and calmness? Call ye this fanaticism! The grossest fanaticism is that which leaves out God. If He be anywhere, He is everywhere; if He be in anything, He is in everything. If He order the seraph’s flight, He ordains the sparrow’s fall; if He telleth the number of the stars, He numbereth the very hairs of the heads of His saints. The minuteness of Providence is the perfection of Providence; and minute as is God’s providence, so minute, if possible, should be our prayers; the only limit of our supplications should be the limit of His gracious interpositions. Since He is above all, and through all, and in all, let us look to Him *for* all—let us look to Him *in* all.

The unforeseen vicissitudes to which we are exposed should keep us ever on the wing in prayer. How suddenly do perils, changes, and perplexities spring up! What can we do, then, but watch and pray? We cannot watch as we ought without praying; we cannot pray as we ought without watching. Watch in all things, and you will pray in all things. This reasoning gathers additional strength from the fact that the opportunities for stated prayer which many of you enjoy are few and straitened. Many of our artisans who toil late and early, many of our young men who live behind the desk or the counter, many of our servants who are occupied from dawn till night in their domestic duties, can seldom, or never, secure seasons for retirement during the pressure of their daily tasks. Some time will, indeed, be redeemed even from the pillow to be consecrated to God by His people; but are they to have no further intercourse with Him throughout the day? That must not—need not, be. Whilst the hand is toiling for the

bread that perisheth, the soul may be holding communion with the Father of our spirits. However our minds may be exercised in business, there may be parentheses of prayer, and interjections of praise, checkering and hallowing our occupations all the while. Never let the busied servant, never let the harassed tradesman say, 'I have no time for converse with my God.' Only take heed that your hearts be not absorbed by your worldly work, and you will find many a fleeting opportunity for intercourse with Him who is about your path and hearkens to your slightest thought.

The snares and foes which beset your career of business ought to turn your eyes continually to 'the Stronghold whereunto you may always resort.' In the vicissitudes of commercial affairs, in your complicated transactions with your fellows, how subtly will temptation often steal upon you ; sometimes in the shape of a friend, who comes to draw you into some doubtful speculation, sometimes in the shape of an alluring offer of gain at the cost of some small sacrifice of conscience ; at another time in the form of seductive openings, fitted to beguile you into adventuring beyond what your resources warrant ; in these and a thousand other disguises will Satan lie in wait to entangle you. Meantime, in concert with the world and with the wicked one will your own false foolish heart strive hard to deceive, and deceiving, to betray you. You know not where the trap is laid ; you know not whence the shaft may be aimed. Where, then, is your safety ?—where ?—but in flying at the moment for refuge to your God ? Were we alive as we ought to be to the perils that surround us in our pilgrimage through the world, we should never presume to lose sight of the mercy-seat. Travellers make mention of a bird so timid in disposition, and so liable to the assaults of unnumbered enemies, that she almost lives in the sky, scarcely ever venturing to rest her wings ; and even when forced through very weariness to repose, she seeks the loftiest rock, and there still

keeps her eyes only half shut, and her pinions only half folded—in readiness on the first sign of danger to spread her wings and soar away to the heavens for safety. What an apt emblem of how the child of God should ‘pass the time of his sojourning here!’ Seldom should the wing of his devotion droop, or the eye of his watchfulness close; and even when he must repose, it should ever be in an attitude of vigilance and prayerfulness, prepared at the first signal of approaching danger, to mount upwards and find his refuge in the bosom of his God.

Say not that devotion will be out of harmony with some of the scenes in which you mingle. Wherever duty calls you, devotion may accompany you. Where you would shrink from praying, you ought to shrink from going. Tell me the circle or the recreation where you cannot consistently lift up your heart to God—where it would seem a kind of solemn mockery to ask for His presence and blessing—and I will tell you the circle or the recreation where as Christians you should not be found. If it is not a place meet for prayer, it is not a place meet for you. No engagement in which you fear to ask the Lord to bless you, can be right. Take as a sure test of the character of any plan, pleasure, or pursuit, the simple question—‘Can I implore the divine blessing upon it?’ If not—then, in the Lord’s name, let it be foregone. You cannot enter upon it without guilt. For ‘whatsoever is not of faith is sin,’ and whatsoever cannot be sanctified by prayer is not of faith, and, consequently, must be sinful in the sight of God. This is a practical rule of much value. Young men! carry it with you into the midst of your avocations, your relaxations, your companionships—apply it honestly, and it will serve you faithfully.

Very elevating and hallowing is the influence which a pervading habit of prayer will exert on the mind of a man, however he may be immersed in business. It will keep him

from being secularized by his occupations ; it will save him from the debasement of pursuing mere money-making as his end—of expending the energies of the immortal spirit on the accumulation of shining dust ; it will keep him above the world whilst occupied in the world ; it will enable him to look upon it steadily and clearly, undazzled by its meteors and unbewildered by its mists. As with the noble bird that, strong in wing, towers far above the clouds, mounts into the clear blue sky, hovers amid the undimmed beams of the sun, and thence surveys the landscape spread below him ; the loftier his flight, the smaller look the objects he has left behind : so to those who in frequent communion with God, mount up by faith on wings like an eagle—to them the things of earth look very small—the things of heaven incomparably great.

This is the secret for keeping the world in its proper place. So kept, it will not become your master—it will be your servant ; and it is a good servant, but a miserable master. Need it be added, that a devotional spirit will greatly tend to keep the temper unruffled and the mind serene ? Too frequently, even the sincere servants of God reflect little of the meekness and lowliness of Christ amid the excitements of business ; men cannot ‘take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus.’ They betray an eagerness for gain, a keenness in driving a bargain, an irritability of feeling, an inordinacy of desire, a want of kindness, generosity, and forbearance towards others, an absence of sympathy towards their dependants and of consideration towards their equals, which mars the harmony of their character, neutralizes their influence for good, and brings reproach on the Holy Name which they bear. Why is this ? Because they do not set the Lord always before them. How then is the perpetual recognition of God to be secured ?—By calling upon Him in everything. Let the Christian who is of a peevish and excitable temper, instead of justifying himself

by pleading that 'it is natural' to him, learn a lesson from that heathen philosopher of whom we read, that being subject to paroxysms of anger, he resolved to overcome the fault, and in order to do so made it a rule whenever he felt the first risings of wrath to repeat to himself some lines from Homer which are of a very soothing and subduing kind; and such was the effect of his resolution that ultimately he became as noted for his gentleness as he had before been for his irritability. Will not this heathen rise up in judgment against many a Christian who ought to know and follow a more excellent way? Ought not he, when passion or perturbation shakes his breast, to lift up his heart to Him who said to the winds and waves of the sea of Galilee, 'Peace, be still, and there was a great calm,' and who is no less able and ready to rebuke the swelling surges of the soul, and hush them into peace?

There is no besetting sin a believer may not master if he encounter as well as defy it in the name of Jesus and in the power of prayer. But however he may pray against it in the closet, if he forget God in the moment of assault, there is little reason to hope that he will prevail. He must confront his enemy on his knees in order that he may conquer.

And how benign the influence of incessant prayer in keeping the mind from being fevered by the excitements, or fretted by the anxieties, of business! It oils the wheels and abates the friction of mercantile life! It is not so much the physical toil or the mental strain which a man undergoes in the struggle of the world that wears out his health and exhausts his energies—as it is the worry and vexation, the anxiety and suspense, which befall him in his harassing career; these are the things which waste his spirits, consume his energies, and precipitate his death. How, then, are these effects to be counteracted? How—but by 'casting all your care on Him who careth for you,' 'and in every-



thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, letting your requests be made known unto God ?' This is the antidote to the fret and fever which wear out so many of the eager traffickers of our day. The breath of devotion would diffuse a dewy freshness and calm over their spirit even amid the heat and dust of the wearisome world.

Nor let me fail to remind you how benignly the habit of ejaculatory devotion will tell on your seasons of stated communion. You will find it effectually subserve the converse of the closet, and the worship of the sanctuary. Many of you can witness, that when you enter the chamber or the temple you find it hard indeed to rally and concentrate your thoughts ; they are scattered amid your plans, and wandering after your gains. Complaints of distractions in prayer are constant, and bitter as constant. But why is it thus with so many of us ? Because the instrument once unstrung, it is long before it can be tuned anew. Let it be kept in tune all the day long, and the time now lost in tuning it may be spent in sweeping sweet music from its strings. If you allow your business throughout the day to chain your thoughts to earth, your closet at eventide will hardly raise them to the skies.

He who does not take a prayerful spirit into his house of merchandise, runs a great risk of taking his business into the house of prayer. He cannot spread his table for traffic or for money-changing in the holy place ; yet in the sight of God he may desecrate it as really as those who of old were driven from the temple by Him who said, 'The zeal of Thine house hath eaten me up.' The way, therefore, to have your heart in harmony with the worship of the sanctuary and the communion of the closet is never to suffer its chords to be jarred. It was said of a distinguished Christian of other days, that he lived on the steps of the mercy-seat. It is the testimony borne to the holy man who is about to go as Bishop to Western Africa, that 'he lives upon his knees.'

This is to live safely—this is to live in the porch of heaven. Hence it was said by a dying saint, ‘I am changing my place, but not my company.’ Like Enoch, he had walked with God; and death to him was but rising from the footstool to the throne; or like going out of the vestibule into the inner sanctuary.

Brethren, are there not many of you who have never thought on this wise of prayer? It may be, that from childhood you have repeated some form of devotion, more or less statedly; sometimes perhaps intermitted, and afterwards resumed—but has it not been a body unquickened by a soul? Had it been living, it would have been breathing; and had it been breathing the breath of life would never have wholly ceased. Let it sink deep into your hearts—for it is a true saying—if we confine our prayers to our chamber there is reason to fear that we never pray at all. Were the flame of devotion really kindled in the closet, it could not be suppressed throughout the occupations of the day. The rather, as we need the protection of prayer far more in the midst of the world than we need it in the hours of retirement. It is not on parade, whilst going through his exercises in peace, but when called into the struggles of the battle-field, that the soldier needs all his courage and his skill. And so with the soldier of the cross; it is when forced to grapple with the temptations, the difficulties, and the perils of an evil world, that he most needs to pray and to watch unto prayer. Should this test convince you that you have never prayed in truth—oh, pray to pray! Cry out as the apostles did, ‘Lord, teach us to pray!’ Give Him no rest till He fulfil His promise to you, ‘I will pour upon them the spirit of grace and of supplications.’ Thirst for that spirit. Your body can no more breathe without your soul than your soul can breathe without the Holy Ghost. He is the soul of the soul. Spiritual life begins when He enters the soul. Then, as the infant on its birth shows that it is alive by its

feeble cry, so will the new-born babe in Christ evince its life by the breath of prayer ; and the first aspiration that bursts from his heart, will be the first respiration of immortality. A slight indication—but of a revolution so stupendous, that God only can span it ;—of a change so lasting, that eternity alone can measure it.

Christian men of business! in these days of high pressure, beware lest the devotional spirit be overborne by the world. Are you earnest and diligent in your callings?—We do not find fault with you for your diligence and earnestness ; on the contrary, we believe that as a man cannot succeed in his pursuits without being diligent, so he should look upon diligence as his obvious duty. But never let your business smother your devotion. If you do, you are trafficking for hell ; you are bartering the merchandise of glory for the merchandise of dust. Keep alive, wherever you go, a conscious dependence upon God. Realise His presence in every place ; ask His blessing on every undertaking ; consult with Him in every step. You know that this is wisdom—this is safety—this is peace. I challenge you to look back upon your lives and say—when did you ever, in faithfulness and submission, ask for God's guidance in forming and for His blessing in prosecuting any plan, and find reason at last to bewail the issue ? But how many steps taken, how many opinions formed, how many engagements entered into, how many undertakings ventured upon, without seeking Divine interposition, have ultimately filled you with sorrow and shame ! Happy for you, that your own backslidings corrected you—that you reaped the fruit of your unfaithfulness in this world. 'Whom the Lord loveth He rebuketh and chasteneth.' If your prayerless purposes had prospered, your prosperity would have been sent in anger, not in love. Learn wisdom, then, from the past. Go to God with everything. Fear not to weary His love. Count nothing too small for His notice. Does the frequency of

his child's appeals displease a tender father? Whatever interests you will interest your heavenly Father. Whatever is not too minute to engage your attention is not too insignificant to be submitted to His.

As watching for your souls, there is no habit I more covet for you than this habit. There is none that will more counteract the secularising influence of trade; none that will more smooth the ruggedness of your path; none that will more secure the consistency of your character. And shall we not rejoice that the Lord's 'ear is ever open to our prayers;' that Jesus 'ever liveth to make intercession for us?' Surpassing privilege! Incomprehensible grace! Be it ours to make full proof of the grace—to take full advantage of the privilege. Let death find us in the spirit, if not in the act, of prayer. One very dear to me expired as he was rising from his knees. Was not his a sweet transition, from the very attitude of prayer to an immortality of praise? Yes, *as we began the life of faith, so may we well close it—and 'enter heaven with prayer.'*

## LECTURE IV.

### NEHEMIAH'S RELIANCE ON GOD'S BLESSING.

'Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven, He will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build.'—NEH. ii. 20.

ONE of the holiest and most devoted of modern missionaries, when, after surmounting almost insuperable difficulties, he had accomplished the translation of Holy Scripture into a language of surpassing difficulty, inscribed upon the last page of his manuscript this memorable saying:—'I give it, as the result of long experience, that prayer and pains, with faith in Christ Jesus, will enable a man to do anything.' Pains, if they be godly pains, will always be hallowed by prayer; and prayer, if it be genuine prayer, will always be followed up by pains. But that both may be successful, there must be faith in Christ Jesus. Whatever efforts we make, and however we may be strengthened to make them, we cannot command the result. The issue is still with Him who 'doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest thou?' A profound conviction of this truth is essential to the life of faith—essential to constrain us in all our doings to hang only upon God.

We have traced out, in the character of that exalted

servant of God whose history we are illustrating for your instruction in righteousness, the great principle which actuated him ; the secret strength which enabled him to obey that principle ; and the channel through which that strength was continually derived into his soul. But the confidence that upheld him in all and through all his toils and perils rested not only on the succour which was promised to him, but on the ultimate success of which he was no less assured. He did not more entirely trust in God that He would enable him to fulfil his duty than he trusted in God that in the fulfilment of that duty, the divine blessing would crown his exertions. He regarded himself as no less dependent for the issue than for the effort on Him who perfects His wisdom in His children's foolishness, His strength in their weakness, His grace in their unworthiness, and His sovereignty in their success. He had undertaken a most arduous work ; a work beset with every circumstance fitted to dishearten ; a work to which his resources and his agencies were utterly unequal ; a work which had to be carried on in the face of the bitterest antagonism from adversaries who laughed it to scorn. He tells us that when he first came up to Jerusalem he concealed the errand on which he had come ; he kept his purpose hidden in his own breast—the purpose to restore the walls of the city, 'the place of his fathers' sepulchres.' This he did that his adversaries might not be aware of his design. The better to mature his plan without awakening suspicion, he says :—' I arose in the night, I and some few men with me ; neither told I any man what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem : neither was there any beast with me, save the beast that I rode upon. And I went out by night by the gate of the valley, even before the dragon well, and to the dung port, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem, which were broken down, and the gates thereof were consumed with fire. Then I went on to the gate of the fountain and

to the king's pool ; but there was no place for the beast that was under me to pass. Then went I up in the night by the brook, and viewed the wall, and turned back, and entered by the gate of the valley, and so returned. And the rulers knew not whither I went, or what I did.' Though ninety years had elapsed since the decree had gone forth for the restoration of the children of Israel, yet so crushed had they been with disasters—so overborne by discouragements—so overawed by the might and malignity of their foes—that, though the house of their God was restored, the walls of the city lay scattered in utter desolation. Then said Nehemiah unto them : 'Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire : come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach. Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me ; as also the king's words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work.' Thus, though there were mighty masses of rubbish which had to be removed, though the wall to be built was of vast extent, and though their resources were wholly incommensurate with the work, yet, animated by the manifest presence, and confiding in the assured blessing of the Almighty, they girded themselves to the stupendous task. 'But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian (who had authority under Artaxerxes), heard it, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What is this thing that ye do ? Will ye rebel against the king ?' In this manner their enemies tried to dismay them by insinuating that the Jews were revolting against the king, and that they were fortifying the city with the intention of casting off the Assyrian yoke. 'Then answered I them,' says Nehemiah, with noble reliance upon God—'Then answered I them'—not that the king had given me a decree to undertake the work ; not

that I was in reality obeying, instead of resisting him—but this heavenly hero's sublime and magnanimous answer was,—‘the God of heaven, He will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build.’ And in the might of that confidence, they prosecuted their task, spite of every discouragement—spite of contempt and fraud and treachery—spite of false friends and open enemies, till, in fifty-two days, this handful of feeble men brought the mighty work to a happy issue; the walls of the city were finished, and the gates were again set up, because the good hand of their God was upon them. ‘If God be for us, who can be against us?’

Such is the interesting and encouraging theme which invites the attention more especially of those of you who are busied in the world's affairs. May it minister to your instruction, admonition, and encouragement! And may the Spirit of God be with us whilst we enlarge upon it!

The principle which underlies the practical recognition of God in all the events of ordinary life is—that for results, just as much as for the discharge of duties, we are utterly dependent upon Him. We are very apt to lose sight of this truth; either on the one hand, presuming on consequences as inevitable, or on the other, not content with being vigilant and energetic in the pursuit of our objects, we harass ourselves about the issue of our endeavours. We take upon ourselves the burden of the result, when we should take upon ourselves only the yoke of obedience to the will of God. Yea, and even for the accomplishment of that obedience, as we have in a former lecture shown you, we are to confide in the grace which is sufficient for us. Surely if we rely upon God for strength to fulfil every duty, we should no less rely upon Him to crown the fulfilment of every duty with success. If no effort is of us, but as it is of God, must not the upshot of all our efforts be still more palpably in His hands? If, therefore, we have to confide in Him in



order that we may do anything that is good, it follows that we must repose upon Him in order that what we do may be brought to good effect.

That we may exercise such reliance, it is essential that we realize the all-pervading, all-controlling government of the Lord God Omnipotent. In creed we all avouch that sovereignty; yet in the practical details of life, where is the Christian who carries out this faith in all its bearings and in all its influences? The general providence of God, His sway over systems and worlds and nations, and even over events of magnitude and moment, we do not deny. To deny this would be virtual atheism. But to own God as fashioning every link in the complicated chain of our history; to discern His hand in the least as well as in the greatest; to realize a Providence which overrules what is evil, as well as orders what is good—a Providence which restrains the unwilling, whilst it leads the obedient—a Providence so transcendent, that none and nothing can thwart it; so minute, that none and nothing can escape it—a Providence which directs the insect's wing and the atom's flutter, as well as the planet's course and the archangel's flight—to do this clearly, constantly, and experimentally, is an attainment in the divine life as rare as it is precious. Yet this, and nothing less than this, is warranted or rather commanded, by such expressions as 'in Him we live, and move, and have our being;' 'the wrath of man shall praise Him, and the remainder of wrath He will restrain;' 'not a sparrow is forgotten before God;' 'not a sparrow falleth to the ground without our heavenly Father's will;' 'the very hairs of your head are all numbered.' We must interweave these assurances with the tissue and texture of our lives; they must enter as an essential element into the formation of our purposes, and into the conduct of our pursuits. It is thus we 'must walk with God.' It is thus we must wait upon Him as 'working all things according to the counsel of His

own will.' It is thus we must trust in Him, and be 'doing good;' 'commit our way to Him, that He may bring it to pass.' If, however, we are to have confidence in God's paternal Providence whilst pursuing our designs, it is essential that we should pursue them as His servants. We must be assured that we are obeying His will. We must be diligent because obedient. Mark the connexion between Nehemiah's confidence, and the energy with which he and his companions girded themselves to their task. 'The God of heaven, He will prosper us,'—What then? Did he argue—let us sit still, till God accomplish the work by miracle; let us wait, God will fulfil His own designs?—No, but 'therefore we His servants will arise and build;' we will labour, 'forasmuch as we know our labour is not in vain in the Lord.' It is thus in doing the will of God, that we must look for the blessing of God. So that, if we are not satisfied that the purpose we are cherishing, or the friendships we are forming, or the undertaking we are enterprising, has the sanction, and is in harmony with our duty, we cannot proceed in the calm hope that 'God will prosper us.' Nothing can animate and sustain a Christian like the persuasion, 'I am about my Father's business; I am where He would have me be; I am doing what He would have me do.' The first question, therefore, in all cases is, 'Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?' 'Is this *Thy* way?' 'Then it shall be *my* way.' 'Is this *Thy* pleasure?' 'Then it shall be *my* pleasure.' We must take every step in faith. We must 'hear a word behind us, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it; when we turn to the right hand or turn to the left.' Then, only then, shall we be able to pursue our path in the sweet conviction that all must be well, everlastingly well; for the upshot will not be ours, but His whom we serve.

Whilst, however, we reckon without wavering that God will insure to us a happy result, we must leave the time

and the circumstances and the character of the result entirely in His hands. We are not to prescribe, but to submit; we are not to say, 'Thus it must be'—but 'Father, Thy will, not mine, be done!' It is enough for us to know that the issue shall be 'according to the good pleasure of His will,' though it may not prove in accordance with our narrow forecastings, or congenial to our natural desires. Disappointment may be the result—and yet God have prospered us; heaviness and trouble the consequences—and yet God have blessed us. How? Because He may have been disappointing our earthly expectations for the purpose of strengthening our heavenly hopes. He may have been overshadowing our present prospects for the purpose of brightening our visions of the future. He may have been denying us perishing wealth, in order to augment our imperishable riches. He may have been bereaving us of the honour that cometh from man, in order to give us more of the honour that cometh from Himself. It is indispensable that we should bear this in mind, else we may be haunted with the impression that God has failed to prosper us, though we arose and began to build in His name. Success according to the judgment of God is widely different from success according to the judgment of man. The Lord often fulfils His promises by seeming to break them. Abraham went forth from his home and country in the obedience of faith; yet, when he reached the promised land, God 'gave him no inheritance in it—no, not so much as to set his foot on.' By faith Moses led Israel out of Egypt, yet he was shut up forty years in the wilderness, and never printed his footmark on the holy land. We must see 'the end of the Lord' before we can fully understand His ways. Meantime, suffice it that He has assured us in relation to the man whose 'delight is in the law of the Lord,' that 'whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.' Here let us rest. To this let us cling. It is a sheet-anchor which never drives. Bear in

mind that in this world we see but fragments of the divine plan—we catch but glimpses of the concatenation of the divine chain. When we shall see as we are seen, and know as we are known, then will the symmetry of the plan, and the perfection of the chain, be clear as the light of heaven. Then shall we discern what now it is so hard to conceive, that ‘all things work together for good to them that love God;’ that the Almighty Master of the universe harmonises all things, however seemingly jarring, in such wise as to make all eventuate in one chorus of eternal praise to the glory of the riches of grace.

Such is the principle which a Christian ought to carry into all the duties of his secular and all the struggles of his spiritual life. He will find its influence alike practical and blessed. Truly practical—it will furnish sails to his vessel—oil to his machinery. A man tossed to and fro with apprehensions is unfitted for exertion; he wastes in a flickering blaze the oil which should feed a steady flame. Solicitude about the result paralyses his effort for its attainment. Relieve him of this burden, and you prepare him for his task. Nothing unnerves more than an anxious mind. And whence does such a mind usually spring? From taking upon ourselves the care of consequences, instead of devoting our attention to duties alone. Let the Christian commit his way unto the Lord, trust in Him, and be doing good—and what hung like a millstone round his energies will be gone, and he will gird up his loins and pursue his course, like the unchained eagle mounting into the sky. Nothing so effectually emboldens a man to do right as the confidence that all things are in his Father's hands. What can divert—what dishearten—what withstand—him who, in the depth of conscious sincerity, can say, ‘The God of heaven He will prosper me; therefore I His servant will arise and build?’

Yes, the principle is potent as it is practical. ‘Know-

ledge is power,' says the philosopher: 'Faith is power,' says the saint. It endues the believer with a sort of derived omnipotence. 'If thou canst believe,' said Christ, 'all things are possible to him that believeth.' And what is faith? Confidence in God—confidence in His Almighty power and faithfulness; a confidence which nerves the soul for every task. Whether, therefore, for spiritual or for secular duty—whether for duty in the outer or the inner life—there is no principle can brace a man like the principle of implicit trust in God. Let a believer once rise to the height of this principle, and he will smile at difficulty and be calm in danger. Let him be assured that God says, 'Do this,' and he will say, 'It shall be done; Thou wilt enable me to do it. I am but a clay vessel for Thee to use; the excellency of the power is all Thine own. The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom then shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom then shall I be afraid?' Here is the power which enabled the saints of old to 'quench the violence of fire, to stop the mouths of lions—out of weakness to be made strong, to wax valiant in fight, to put to flight the armies of the aliens.' In the might of this confidence the believer will hold on his course through the storm as through the calm—in the midst of darkness as in the midst of day. Nor is this faith less fitted to regulate than it is to invigorate in all circumstances and in all anxieties. Is the result with God?—Then the grand inquiry is, not what is pleasant, but what is right—not what is plausible, but what is sound—not what looks most likely to prosper, but what can best anticipate success from God. This singleness of reliance will secure singleness of judgment; and the believer will have but one supreme study in all his pursuits, earthly as well as heavenly—even to ascertain and fulfil the will of his Father in heaven. Steering by that will as his chart, how steady will be his course, and how fixed his helm! Whilst

others are tossed to and fro by conflicting winds and opposing currents, he will be borne along as by a gulf-stream, wafted as by a trade-wind.

Need it be added, that this principle will sweetly compose and calm the Christian in the pursuit of his earthly duties? He who is actuated by it can be tranquil under reproaches, misconstructions, and misrepresentations. He will 'hold him still in the Lord,' as the psalm we have been reading to-night, beautifully expresses it—'still in the Lord'—self-possessed and unruffled in Him, as overruling all things—as doing all things well. Such an one will be able to act on the counsel given in the same expressive psalm, 'Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.' 'Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass; and He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday.' Hence it was, that Nehemiah was not careful to answer the bad men who laughed his design to scorn, and charged him with treason against his King. He contented himself with simply protesting, 'The God of heaven He will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build.' Those who thus honour God shall be honoured by Him. Therefore it is that the virtues of this heavenly hero were emblazoned on the page of inspiration as an example for all generations; whilst the reproaches of Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, have passed away like the mist before the morning light. In like manner will all the enemies of the Lord perish, whilst 'the righteous shall be like the sun when he goeth forth in his strength.' No matter how dark the path which the believer pursues, if only he pursue it without faltering; for 'light is sown for the righteous,' however long it may be before it spring forth. 'Though it tarry, wait for it; for at the last it shall come,

and shall not tarry.' Your labour cannot be in vain, if it be labour in the Lord.

Is it not then clear as the sunshine, that a single eye to the blessing of God as the spring of all exertion and the source of all success, is of vital moment in all your undertakings, whether spiritual or secular? Hence it is you must find nerve and confidence for the mighty work which is accomplishing, or has to be accomplished, within you—personal salvation. Look into the natural condition of your souls. Does it not resemble the city of Jerusalem when Nehemiah explored it—'The wall is broken down, and the gates thereof burned with fire?' But it is not the will of God that your moral being should remain thus desolate. 'This is the will of God, even your sanctification.' This is the will of God, even that out of the ruins of your nature there should be raised up a temple within you for 'an habitation of God through the Spirit.' Stagger not then at the greatness of the task, or at the difficulties which beset it, or at the impotency of your own efforts. The God of heaven He will prosper you; therefore arise and build. Set about the glorious architecture in the assurance that He is with you and will not suffer you to fail in the attempt. 'Build up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost.' 'Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity'—till the top-stone of the living temple be brought forth, 'with shoutings of grace, grace unto it.' Be 'confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you, will perfect it until the day of Christ.' The God of heaven is with you—arise and build!

More especially take this principle with you in your efforts 'to set forth the glory of God, and set forward the salvation of all men.' In these latter days, God sets before

you many great and effectual doors of usefulness. Fear not to enter by them ; say not, 'I am weak, and have small resources—how can I accomplish aught?' It is the same with God to save by the few, as by the many—to discomfit his enemies by the crash of earthen pitchers, as by the serried hosts of the mighty. 'Who hath despised the day of small things?' How slight the first streak of dawn ! How minute the grain of mustard-seed ! Some of the noblest exploits in the Church have had the feeblest beginnings. Look at the birth of the great work of latter-day evangelization in our own Church. A few Christian men met together in the vestry of a plain chapel ; they pondered and prayed over the state of the heathen world ; they conceived and planned the glorious enterprise of evangelizing all Pagan lands. What has been the result ? The God of heaven prospered them. They arose and built. The Church Missionary Society is the consequence. That society can now count the children which she has borne to God by tens of thousands ; her missionaries are preaching in almost every tongue the wondrous works of God ; and all the ends of the earth are white already unto the harvest. 'What hath God wrought !' 'Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth'—if only it be fire from above !

Regard not then the difficulties that may block up the path of usefulness, but have respect to the promises of God. Say not with the slothful, 'There is a lion in the way,' nor with the faithless, 'It cannot be done.' Ask is it right—am I called to attempt it ? Then ask no more. What may not the humblest believer achieve when he sets about his work in the strength, and rests for the result on the arm of the Almighty ?

Beloved, ask great things—attempt great things—expect great things ; only ask in faith, attempt in strength divine, and build all your expectations of success upon the faithfulness of Him that hath promised. Carry this waiting



upon God alone into all your commercial and secular affairs ; enter into no partnership, form no scheme, embark in no speculation, upon which you cannot invoke the blessing of the Lord. And having so done—having asked counsel of God—be not wavering or distrustful as to the issue ; patiently pursue the course that is set before you—and let the Lord do what seemeth Him good. Results are not yours. You have no right to intermeddle with them. They are the province of another. ‘The morrow shall take thought for the things of itself ; sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.’ God is as much in the future as He is in the present ; there is no variableness, no darkness, no futurity with Him. Realize this. ‘Walk by faith, not by sight.’ So—even amidst all the temptations, perplexities, sorrows, and failures to which you will be subjected in this strange, transitory scene—‘the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.’ Amen.

## LECTURE V.

### NEHEMIAH'S ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF GOD'S HAND.

'And the King granted me, according to the good hand of God upon me.'—NEH. ii. 8.

HARD by the altar of burnt-offering stood the altar of incense in the ancient Temple. As the one symbolized the atonement to be made by Christ, and the other the fragrant merits of that atonement: so did the former represent also the offering of prayer to God through Christ's mediation by His faithful people, and the latter the oblation of praise, presented through the same intercession as a sweet-smelling savour to the Lord. Prayer and praise are twin services. They should go hand in hand in the life of the pilgrim of faith. How beautifully are they linked together in the precepts of Scripture! This very evening, you have heard in one verse the injunction—'Pray without ceasing;' and in the next the kindred command—'in everything give thanks.' So when we are bidden to be 'careful for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, to let our requests be made known unto God'—it is added—'with thanksgiving.' Incense ought always to be mingled with the burnt-offering; the prayer that is not savoured with praise is lacking in sweetness. Yet such is the pride, the selfishness, and the unbelief of the human heart, that there is no duty—we ought rather to say, no privilege—more shamefully slighted than the duty—the privilege—of

praise. How many will sue to God in the storm, who straightway forget Him in the calm; how many will call upon Him in the day of their trouble, who fail to acknowledge Him in the day of their deliverance; how many will cry unto Him for succour in the hour of peril, who never own His hand when rescued from their danger in answer to their cries! If there be one symptom more than another that bespeaks the depth of our fall, it is the depth of our ingratitude. As ungodliness is the spiritual epidemic of our nature, so unthankfulness is one of the most palpable evidences of that ungodliness. Men who will be grateful, most grateful, to the mother that bare and nursed them—men who will be grateful, most grateful, to the father that fed and taught and trained them—men who will glow with gratitude towards the friend that stood by them in the hour of their distress;—these very men will never think of the Father of their spirits—never think of Him who has loved them with infinitely more than a mother's tenderness; will be all coldness towards the Friend who so loved them that He laid down His life for them. How loathsome is ingratitude towards man, even in the eyes of men! How would a person be reprobated, and almost execrated, as unworthy of the name of man, who should behave towards a mortal benefactor as too many of us behave towards the Father of mercies and God of all consolation!

Happy was it for the noble servant of God, whose lovely character unfolds more and more of its loveliness the more closely we examine it—happy was it for him that he not only lifted up his heart in prayer when he was in distress, but that after his prayer had been answered he did not overlook the hand that had succoured him—happy was it for him that he did not ascribe to himself the success of his measures, nor burn incense to his own vanity and rob God of the glory due to His name! We have traced the spirit of devotion which pervaded his character; we have seen how

he communed with God, not only in the closet and the sanctuary, but how in the midst of multitudes, when encompassed with perils and insults and perplexities, he still held secret converse with the skies. Now, the same spirit of faith that led him thus to live in prayer, led him also to live in praise. The words to which our attention is directed bring out his acknowledgment of God's interposition in a striking manner.

You will remember that his heart had been sad because 'the city, the place of his fathers' sepulchres,' lay waste—that he had, in his chamber, poured out his heart to the Lord of all power and might on behalf of Jerusalem; you will remember that when, in the discharge of his office, he presented the cup to the king, the king had questioned him concerning the sadness of his countenance, and had opened to him a door of appeal, by asking him, 'For what dost thou make request?' You will remember how, perturbed as the devout Israelite was, he yet forgot not to breathe a petition to the King of kings before he made his suit to his earthly monarch. And what was the consequence? Moved by the Spirit of God, it pleased the king to send the devoted patriot to Jerusalem, and to give him 'letters to the governors beyond the river, and a letter unto Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he might give him timber to make beams for the gates of the palace which appertained to the house, and for the wall of the city.' Thus he obtained all his desire: but he did not ascribe the happy issue to his own adroitness or address, to his influence with the king, or to the prudence with which he had conducted himself. No! he attributed all his success to Him on whom alone he had depended; he summed up his record of the whole transaction in this touching manner: 'and the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me.' He asked—the king granted—but all was of God. His same simple avouchment of the Divine hand shines forth on another occasion in this

very chapter. When he came to Jerusalem, and found the people utterly disheartened, and strove to stir them up to gird themselves anew to the work, how did he encourage them? What was the most powerful incentive he urged? In the eighteenth verse he says: 'Then I told them *of the hand of my God which was good upon me*; and they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work.' He might have boasted of his services to the king—of his place and authority in Babylon; he might have arrogated to himself the credit of his success. But he was of another spirit; he sought not his own glory, but the glory of his Master in heaven; therefore he told them of the good hand of his God. To this fountain he traced up every stream of blessing.

Now, it is this spirit—pervading the daily walk of the devout man of business—leading him to recognise the Divine hand in all his mercies—to acknowledge all his blessings as coming from God—to regard all his acquisitions as belonging to God—to use all his talents and possessions as the fruits of God's manifold grace—it is this excellent spirit that I desire to portray for you, and to commend to you as worthy of all acceptance. God grant that the Holy Ghost may be in the midst of us, whilst I strive to inculcate this habit of devout thanksgiving on you all!

Ingratitude is the child of pride; thankfulness, the offspring of humility. A proud man will never be truly grateful; a humble man possesses the first element of gratitude. Even in the intercourse of man with man, you will find this rule hold good. Benefit a vain man, and he will ascribe the service to his own desert, he will look upon it as no more than a just tribute to his excellence; but serve a lowly man, and he attribute the service to the kindness of his benefactor. A proud child thinks that he has laid his parents under obligations: a lowly child feels that he can never liquidate the debt of gratitude he owes to them. The same

rule holds in relation to God. You must be lowly, if you would be grateful. The bird that builds the lowest nest, soars the highest in the bright blue sky. The lark hides her nest in the grass, but her flight is far up in the heavens; she loves to lose herself in the beams of the sun till you can tell where she is hovering only by the gushing strains which she pours from on high. It is so with the true servant of God; in proportion as he lays self in the dust, he will mount up on the wings of thankfulness to heaven; praise will fill his lips because humility fills his heart. Were we more profoundly impressed with the sense of our own indeliberateness, we should be more vividly impressed with the sovereign grace and overflowing goodness of our Father in heaven. Men naturally imagine that they have a claim to all they have—yea, and to a great deal more than they possess. They are prone to dwell on what they lack, rather than on what they enjoy: they compare themselves with those more favoured, not with those more suffering than themselves. Can we wonder then, that the world is filled with discontent, instead of thankfulness—with mourning instead of praise? See the hateful effects of such a spirit terribly illustrated in the history of the haughty Haman. But the contrite heart of the believer reminds him that everything short of hell is mercy to a sinner; that a cup of cold water is far beyond his deserts. Take this as the standard by which to measure our mercies, and what a tide of blessing is poured even on the meanest and most desolate of the human race!

Next to humility, there must be faith in order to thankfulness. I strove to show you in my last lecture how the special providence of God ought, in all places and on all occasions, to be realised by the believer—in the counting-house as well as the sanctuary—in the ramifications of business as well as in the ordinances of worship. This minute recognition of Divine interposition is essential in order to the grateful

acknowledgment of the hand of God in our mercies. The believer in chance, who ascribes everything to fortune or to fatality—how can he own the Divine hand? It must be seen to be trusted—it must be trusted to be glorified. Faith, therefore—faith, discerning the Almighty hand within the machinery of second causes, as actuating, controlling, determining all—such a faith is the parent of unfailing praise.

Men of business, from the very nature of their occupations, are specially liable to lose the lively exercise of this practical faith. Their attention is of necessity largely absorbed in the measures which they must adopt—the steps which they must take—the instrumentalities which they must employ in order to success; so that they are apt to fall into a secular, material state of mind, which recognises little beyond physical machinery; or at most, confines the providence of God to a kind of vague universal supervision, but does not trace it as interwoven with the details of life. The frequent consequence is a hardness of spirit, an unthankful, undevotional frame of heart, seldom in contact with God, craving little of His presence, and enjoying little of His peace. It is therefore of the utmost importance, ye men of engrossing occupation, that ye should accustom yourselves to realize the fact, that God is just as much the agent where the most complicated machinery is employed, as He is where there is scarcely a shadow of instrumentality; that He is just as much the agent in giving 'seed to the sower and bread to the eater,' by means of the sun, and the seasons, and the rain, and the gases of the earth, and the thousand other influences which concur to produce the harvest, as He was the agent when He took the five loaves and the few little fishes in His hand, and multiplied them as they were being distributed amongst the multitude. In the one case, we call the agency creation; in the other, providence—but it is not equally, in both—the finger of

God? Were it otherwise, how could God govern the universe? Did causes, or creatures act independently of His control—where were the certainty of His purposes, where the stability of His throne? Oh, could we but keep His hand in view as it is our privilege and duty to keep it, not all the apparatus of means—not all the efforts we employ in our diversified pursuits—not all our devotedness in the prosecution of our multitudinous objects, would make us either unmindful of our dependency, or ungrateful for His ceaseless care!

It is this practical faith you need in order to the perpetual acknowledgment of the goodness of God. Beware how you ever ascribe your success to any skill or power of your own. Take heed that you do not boast because you may have been vigorous and healthy; or because your knowledge may have been clear, and your judgment prompt and sound; or because, having laid your plans with consummate prudence, you carried them out with consummate address; or because, having adopted every precaution against what the world calls accident and chance, your precautions were crowned with the happiest result. What though all this be true, are you therefore to vaunt with the godless Assyrian, 'My own hand hath got it me, and my wisdom, because I am prudent?' If you so boast, God will leave you to your self-sufficiency, and your prosperity will be your ruin. Rather than this, better that you should fail in every plan, be baffled in every speculation, be beggared instead of being enriched. Otherwise you will have had your reward—and a wretched recompense you will find it to be.

The merchant has most reason to watch and pray in the day of his prosperity. It is easier to bear the ebb of disappointment than the flood-tide of success. The vessel that had weathered the storm sometimes springs the leak, or goes to pieces on the sunken rock, in the midst of the calm. So it has often been with the professor of godliness; after



having borne the heavings and tossings of the tempestuous deep, he has made shipwreck on the glassy sea amidst the sunshine of gladness. We have most reason to watch when we think ourselves most secure. It was the beautiful remark of a poor Christian, when unexpected relief was given to her—‘Oh! what a blessing it is to be poor, that one may see the hand of God so plain.’ How just the sentiment! The hand of God is often concealed from the rich in the very affluence of its gifts; whilst to the pious poor it is quite naked, though it spreads their table but with bread and water. Hence the relish of their scanty fare. For a dinner of herbs seasoned with gratitude is incomparably sweeter than a stalled ox eaten in selfish thanklessness.

Think not that there is no danger of your being betrayed into this base spirit. Remember the conduct of Hezekiah—the good King Hezekiah. When the blaspheming monarch of Assyria came up against Jerusalem and besieged it, and the Jewish prince was driven to sore extremity, then he sought his God right humbly, and spread the letter of his adversary before the mercy-seat, and cried aloud for deliverance; and the Lord hearkened unto his prayer, and the angel of the Lord went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians, till ‘they were all dead corpses;’ and again, when he was in sickness, and nigh unto death, he turned his face to the wall, and wept and prayed and pleaded; and God had respect to his supplication, and added fifteen years to his life—But what was the result? At first indeed, the King was filled with gratitude, and exclaimed, ‘The living, the living, he shall praise Thee, as I do this day; the father to the children shall make known Thy truth; all the day long will I sing Thy praise!’—yet the sad record of his after days is, ‘But Hezekiah rendered not again unto the Lord, according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up.’ Is it not often so amongst ourselves? Where are those who were sick, and called upon God in their sickness, and He

restored them?—Have they rendered unto the Lord according to the benefit done unto them? Christ said of the lepers whom He had healed, 'Were there not ten cleansed, but where are the nine?' In like manner we may say—Were there not ten raised from the bed of languishing—but where are the nine? Were there not ten prospered in their plans—but where are the nine? Were there not ten rescued from impending peril—but where are the nine? Were there not ten who escaped the pestilence that walketh in darkness—but where are the nine? One, here and there—sometimes the outcast and the stranger, sometimes the man we should have least expected—returns to give glory to God. But where are the heartless, thankless multitude of the recipients of divine goodness?

However prevalent the sin of ingratitude, there is none God abhors with a deeper abhorrence, there is none which He will more assuredly punish. 'He will not give his glory to another.' Behold an instance. Who was more prosperous than the haughty Nebuchadnezzar? Yet what said he in the pride of his heart, when he had finished his matchless city? He said, 'Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?' And what was the consequence? 'The same hour the king was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen; and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws.' God turned into a beast the man who was so brutish that he did not know, or so arrogant that he would not own, the hand that gave him all. But after he had been reduced to the lowest debasement, when at length his understanding returned unto him, then he 'blessed the Most High, and praised and honoured him that liveth for ever;' and 'who doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth.'

But it is time that we should remind you of the benign

influence which the spirit of continual acknowledgment of the hand of God will exert upon you. One of its happiest effects will be to enable you to bear prosperity with meekness. Ascribe your success to self, and you are sure to be intoxicated with pride ; ascribe it to God, and your very success will humble you. Then you will be able to carry the overflowing cup steadily, and to sip from it with safety ; you will taste of it thankfully, but you will not drain it to the dregs. Receiving all as from God, the more you have, the more will you be stimulated to faithfulness in your trust. You will realize that you are not proprietors, but stewards ; that you are not masters, to do what you will with your own, but servants, to trade with your Lord's money, that when He cometh and reckoneth with you, He may receive His own with usury. As you expect your servant to be faithful to you in the use of your property, you will feel that so God expects you to be faithful to Him in the administration of that which is His. How effectually will this thought guard you against being lifted up or carried away by what God entrusts to you ! 'It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not,' will be the language of the believer in the hour of his distress ; and 'I am less than the least of all his mercies,' will be his sentiment in the day of his fulness and prosperity. Such a man will be more humble the more he is exalted ; and the more God gives him and enables him to do, the more will he feel his unworthiness. Beautifully was this spirit exemplified in St. Paul. 'I laboured more abundantly than they all,' says he ; 'yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.' So, again, 'Behold I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.' And after God had done such great things by him among the Gentiles, he said, 'To me, who am less than the least of all saints, is *this* grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.' All of grace—himself nothing.

The same spirit will make a man generous and large-hearted. Where God is forgotten, it is pitiful to see how riches harden the heart of him who gains them. Sometimes the man who was liberal whilst he was poor, becomes niggardly as he becomes wealthy. The tendency of gain is to nourish selfishness if the hand that bestows it be overlooked—and the thirst of selfishness can never be slaked. The reservoir of the covetous never overflows. Recognising no obligation, he yields to no claim. A man of this sort once said, 'Others never give to me, why should I give to others?' Infatuated man! is there none that ever gave to thee? What hast thou that thou hast not received? Has God given thee nothing? Who gave thee reason—life—success? Who prospered thy plans? Who gave thee power to get wealth? Who has kept thy dwelling safe? Who has warded off from thee a thousand calamities which have overtaken thy fellows?—And art thou then indebted to none—has none a right to thy bounty? Wilt thou rob God? Shall He have no share of what is His own? Remember, He cometh to reckon with thee—and then thou must account for 'thy Lord's money.'

Nor will the habitual acknowledgment of God's hand serve only to enlarge a man's heart in bountifulness, it will at the same time save him from self-complacency when he has done all; it will constrain him to ascribe to his Father in heaven both the ability and the disposition to give. If he lets his light shine before men, it is that they may see *his good works*, not *himself*; and glorify not *him*, but his *Father* which is in heaven. When he relieves the poor and needy, it is not in the fond notion of making God his debtor, but in grateful acknowledgment of the hand that has filled him with plenteousness. Thus, by laying up less treasure for himself on earth, he becomes more rich towards God; for what a man freely gives, that is placed to his account in heaven. Keep back what is the Lord's—and in robbing Him you rob

yourself; give what is His out of love to Him—and you secure it to yourself. Look to man for your reward, and you have it; but none shall await you above. Be rich for yourselves, and you shall be poor towards God; be poor towards yourselves, and you shall be rich towards Him. It is therefore, the lowly sense of the divine hand in all which will effectually avert the temptation to which the generous giver is exposed—even to trust in himself, and so let the spirit of self-righteousness mar his charity, and bereave him of ‘the recompense of the reward.’

How beautifully is the union of munificence and humility exemplified in the character of the man after God’s own heart! When David, once a poor shepherd, attained to redundant riches, they did not estrange his heart from God. No, his whole soul was on fire to devote his wealth to the erection of ‘an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob;’ and when he had been premonished that the glory of the work was reserved for his son—a decision to which he submitted without a murmur—he set himself at once to make the most magnificent preparations for the intended palace for God. But when he had done all—when he and his people, animated by his example, had provided a store of gold and precious things, unprecedented in costliness and amount—was the oblation tarnished by a single sentiment of self-satisfaction? Far from it. Hearken to his glorious language:—‘Then the people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly, because with perfect heart they offered willingly to the Lord: and David the king also rejoiced with great joy. Wherefore David blessed the Lord before all the congregation; and David said, Blessed be thou, Lord God of Israel, our Father, for ever and ever. Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and

in thine hand is power and might ; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name. But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort ? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee. For we are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers : our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding. O Lord our God, all this store that we have prepared, to build thee an house for thine holy name, cometh of thine hand, and is all thine own.'

What gracious words ! Could language be more expressive of utter self-renunciation, and simple acknowledgment of the grace of God, not only in the abundance which David had been able to present, but in the joyful willingness with which he had been endued to make the offering ? Indeed, his thankfulness was greater for the willing mind than for the overflowing hand. Flesh and blood had not taught him this, but the Spirit of his Father in heaven. Far better to be rich in heart and poor in hand, than poor in heart and rich in hand. The mite of the poor widow cheerfully given, is of far greater worth in heaven than the costliest gifts of the rich, if grudgingly bestowed.

Need I call upon you to remark the transport of joy which filled the breast of the son of Jesse when he offered so willingly to the Lord ? It is an evidence of the genial influence which the spirit of gratitude and praise exerts on the happiness of him in whom it dwells. God has bound up our happiness in our duty ; and in no duty more than in that of thankfulness. Even when felt towards a human benefactor, how sweet the emotion of gratitude—except to a proud and selfish heart ! But if it be so in relation to an earthly friend, the exuberance of whose kindness may, because of the narrowness of his resources, oppress us ; how much more must it hold good in regard to that Father of mercies, whose gifts

can never burden, because they are given out of an infinite fulness ! The obligation to love and adore Him is an obligation to be joyful and glad. Praise is the fragrance breathed from the flower of joy. He is happiest who is thankfullest. This lesson is taught us by the lower creatures themselves. Morose and unkindly animals express as little of enjoyment as they do of gratefulness by their snarling and growling sounds. The beasts and birds of night are rarely gladsome. But the lambs, which sport and gambol in their green pastures, and the birds, which in the early morning wake the echoes of the woodland with their songs, all tell most unmistakably that they are happy. How much more then, must it be the blessedness of man 'to look through nature up to nature's God,' and glorify the Giver in all His varied gifts !

It is a pleasant thing to be thankful. Nothing will more soothe our toils, beguile our cares, or animate us, amid all the hardships, emergencies, vexations, and vicissitudes of life than this blessed emotion. You cannot pursue your busy callings in any way so fitted to abate the wear and tear to which they subject you, as by carrying into the counting-house or the warehouse, the manufactory or the shop, this spirit of humble dependency and gratitude. What elasticity will it give to your minds—what cheerfulness to your labours ! It brings down much of heaven to earth—forestalling angelic bliss. We are nearest to heaven, and likeliest to angels, when we are most absorbed in praise.

In blessing God, we are blessed of Him. I have known men laden with the riches of this world, abounding in honours, 'clothed in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day ;' yet full of restlessness, repining, and discontent ; satiated with pleasure, and weary of life. Why was it so with them ? Because, instead of using the world, they abused it ; instead of being filled with thankfulness, they were tormented by covetousness. I have known a man,

coarsely clad, poorly housed, and sparingly fed, who yet walked in sunshine, and toiled in peace—just because he seasoned the dinner of herbs with thanksgiving, and beguiled his daily task with praise. An unthankful man can never be happy; a thankful man cannot be wretched. It is not what a man has, but what he enjoys, that signifies to him. How beautifully just the sentiment of Addison! He says in one of his hymns—

‘And in a thankful heart hast doubled all my store.’

Give such an one a crust of bread and a cup of water and he will relish them; whilst the selfish man will devour the stalled ox in bitterness. The lark will sing amid the wires of his cage, as well as in the sunny sky; and the loving Christian can raise his anthem in the dungeon as well as in the sanctuary, in poverty as well as in affluence, in the storm as well as in the calm. Thankfulness will make the bed of anguish easy, and the yoke of labour light.

To crown all—no spirit will more adorn a Christian's walk and conversation than the spirit of praise. Whether in the warehouse, the counting-house, or the shop, an unthankful man of business dishonours God, and brings a reproach upon His service. Instead of a generous, genial, elastic mind, he exhibits a worried, repining, selfish temper. The world will lay this to the account of his religion. They will not be won by such an example. That man will reflect neither the beauty nor the blessedness of serving Christ. The garment of holiness is then most comely when it is fastened by the golden clasp of thankfulness. When the Christian is thus adorned, men take knowledge of him that he has been with Jesus; they will be led to covet that happiness which the world can neither give nor take away. What shall I more say of the spirit of thankfulness? It is alike acceptable to the Creator, and beseeeming to the creature—the glory of angels, and the element of heaven.



What a want there is, throughout Christendom, of the devout acknowledgment of the hand of God ! What a want of it in our own privileged land ! We perceive it in the councils of the nation—we note it in the debates of the senate—we trace it in the measures of our statesmen—we discover it in the tone of the public press—we detect it in the literature of the age—we discern it alike in the transactions of business and in the concerns of domestic life. God grant the spirit of repentance to our land for her past delinquencies in this matter—and may He lead all classes in the community, senators, merchants, tradesmen, ministers, labourers—all, from the highest to the lowest, to recognize His hand in everything ; lest He should in righteous wrath ‘curse our blessings,’ and take away from us the vineyard whose fruits we have failed to render Him in their season !

But what guilt has not each one of us contracted in this matter ! Which of us can say, ‘I have rendered to the Lord according as He has given to me ; I have used His talents as a faithful steward ; my praises have kept pace with His mercies ?’ Rather must not every one of us confess, I have rejoiced in His gifts rather than in Himself, the Giver ; I have ascribed my success to my own wisdom, or resolution, or good fortune (as the language of the world has it) ; I have sought to glorify myself rather than my God ; it is of the Lord’s mercies I am not consumed.’ Look to Jesus to wash away the stains of your unthankfulness ; look to Him to kindle on the altar of your heart a never-ceasing sacrifice of praise.

Be humble, that you may be grateful. Beware of the spirit of pride and discontent—that spirit which cast down Satan from heaven to hell, which drove out our first parents from Paradise, and which embitters every heart in which it reigns. Cherish a lowly, cheerful mind—the disposition to see light in the darkest and love in the severest event. ‘Be clothed with humility,’ and you shall be adorned with the

garments of praise. Cultivate a bright and thankful spirit in your everyday life—not merely on the Sabbath, or in the closet, or in the sanctuary, or even in the secret of your heart, but let it beam forth in your countenance, and breathe forth from your lips. The more you foster such a frame of soul, the more will you become assimilated to the sentiments and the songs of heaven, where thanksgiving will never be silent, and adoration will never be weary; where they everlastingly ascribe all might, and dominion, and majesty, and power, and riches, and glory, and blessing, to Him that sitteth upon the throne—to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three persons in one eternal God. Almighty Saviour, teach and tune our hearts for the worship of eternity!

## LECTURE VI.

### NEHEMIAH'S DETERMINATION OF PURPOSE.

'I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down; why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?'—  
NEH. vi. 3.

THE work which Nehemiah had undertaken was one of no common magnitude, and surrounded with no ordinary difficulties. His resources for its accomplishment were scanty, and the enemies that combined to hinder it were numerous and subtle and strong. They at first assailed him with threats; but finding these in vain, they then had recourse to guile and stratagem. They sought to disquiet him by vain rumours, and to seduce him from his work by pretended kindness. Under fair pretexts, they disguised dark designs. But he had entered on his purpose with a calm resolve; he was satisfied that the enterprise in which he had embarked enjoyed the blessing and protection of God, and nothing could induce him to swerve from its pursuit. 'The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build,' was the sentiment with which he girded himself to his task; and it was in this mighty confidence that he prosecuted the work, undismayed by threats, unembarrassed by plots, in nowise disheartened by difficulties or disappointments. His noble steadfastness of resolution was manifest throughout his career. He had counted the cost, he had made up his mind; his decision was unwavering, and he carried it out with unfaltering energy. There is a surpassing moral grandeur in the reply which he sent to San-

ballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian, and the rest of his enemies, when they said to him—‘Come, let us meet together in some one of the villages in the plain of Ono.’ He transmitted to them this magnanimous message—‘I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down; why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?’ It needs only that you should study his history, to perceive how this sublime determination of spirit pervaded the whole of his course. Whatever his hand found to do, he did it with his might; whatever he resolved to win, he never ceased till he had won it; whatever he determined to encounter, he never failed to overcome. He could do all things, bear all things, surmount all things, through the strength that was perfected in his weakness. This element imparted to his character a peculiar dignity: it set him on high, far above such as take their complexion from circumstances, loving to confer with flesh and blood—the creatures, not the controllers of events. It made him resemble the sun, which ‘cometh forth as a bridegroom out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run his race,’ which never pauses in the career his Maker has assigned him. Clouds and mists and storms cause him no obstruction; he still pursues his lofty pathway in the heavens, and, however shrouded from our view, shines on in unshorn splendour.

This grand essential of character, especially of Christian character, I am, in course, to bring under your contemplation on this occasion. Determination of purpose, primarily, in relation to the concerns of eternity, and secondarily, in the ordinary concerns of the present life, is therefore my weighty theme. The Lord, the Spirit, give us ‘one heart and one way!’

Pitiful was the sketch which Jacob, on his deathbed, drew of his eldest son; he said of him, ‘Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel.’ Instability is fatal to excellence. No man can do anything great who is not firm in his resolves

and constant in his undertakings. The ancient Greeks had an aphorism which is worthy of remembrance—'He is formidable who does *one thing*.' The concentration of the energies of the soul, the faculties of the mind, and the efforts of the life, on some one master end, will give a tone, a coherence, and a grandeur to the character. A man must have a fixed design, or he will never have a steady course. As the instrument tuned to no key-note, so is the man whose spirit is strung to no commanding aim. In vain does the vessel launch forth from the harbour if she have no haven for which to steer, and no helm by which to shape her voyage; but let her obey her rudder well, and keep her point in view, and then, however she may be driven to and fro by adverse winds and opposing currents, she will still return to her track, and urge her way to the longed-for port. The traveller can never reach his distant home unless he set that home before him—he may wander, but he cannot journey; he may seek, but he cannot find. Even so in the career of life. A supreme end, even of an earthly kind, will give a certain force and coherence to character. The ambitious man, in the pursuit of the object which absorbs his soul (evil though that object be when tested by God's truth), imparts a sort of dark grandeur to his character, in consequence of the stern resolve with which he pursues his purpose. Now, he does it to obtain a corruptible crown;—but what ought to be the master aim of every candidate of immortality? The Catechism of the Church of Scotland furnishes the answer to this question excellently. 'What,' it is asked, 'is the chief end of man?' and in reply it is said—'Man's chief end is to know, to serve, to glorify, and to enjoy God for ever.' Worthy, only worthy end of a being so created and endowed as man? If then, such be our being's purpose, all who would live for immortality must live for the accomplishment of that design. Take a just view of your life, and all is but dung and dross in com-

parison with your final acceptance with God. This is the object, the one object which you must enterprise, prosecute, and secure, in order that life may be a blessing to you, and immortality an infinite enhancement of the blessing. What a work is before us!—a work for the achievement of which and in order that it might be achieved, God from eternity planned salvation—a work for the achievement of which, God ‘spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all’—a work for the attainment of which, the eternal Word who ‘was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God, made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men’—a work for the accomplishment of which, God incarnate ‘humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross’—a work for the accomplishment of which, Jesus won His glorious resurrection and ascension, and became head over all things to His Church—a work for the effectuation of which, God the Holy Ghost is sent down by the Father and the Son into the souls of those that are saved, and dwells there, and works there, and carries on a new creation, and builds them up in holiness, and fits and fashions them for heaven—a work the dimensions and issues of which, it will require eternity to unfold, and eternity to comprehend!

In this work every ransomed child of man ought to be intensely engaged. His language should be—‘I have a soul to be saved, a God to glorify, a Saviour to follow, a generation to serve according to the will of God, unnumbered adversaries to vanquish, an evil heart to crucify, eternal life to win—whatever I neglect, these things must not be neglected—all must be subordinated to the things that belong to my peace. To all the impertinences of earth which would divert me—to all the cares of the world which would distract me, I will say—I am doing a great work, I cannot come down; why should the work cease, whilst I

leave it, and come down to you?' Such will be the concentrating power of faith in the soul of the believer; such the energy of that living principle which makes the things unseen, evident—the things hoped for, substantial—the things afar off, contiguous—the things future, present. The mighty mastery of this grace over all the energies of the inner man, cannot be over-estimated. It serves to bring everything into its place—to give all things their true relative proportion; to make the little, little—and the great, great; the grand, grand—and the insignificant, insignificant; the temporal, temporal—and the eternal, eternal; the human, human—and the divine, divine. It gives a man a 'right judgment in all things.' It will sway his desires, and determine his choice.

How illustriously we see this principle exemplified in the character of David! Surrounded with all the fascinations and seductions of his palace and his empire, he yet could exclaim—'*One* thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.' In him was thus fulfilled the promise made of God to His people by the prophet—'I will give them one heart and one way'—unity of purpose, resulting in uniformity of life. But if there be one human character which more than all others illustrates the glorious force of the high purpose which a commanding faith inspires, it is the character of the apostle Paul. From the hour when he tremblingly cried, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' to the hour when he said, 'I am now ready to be offered'—he was borne along by its resistless energy. Hearken to his own description of the singleness of his aim and the indomitableness of his pursuit. 'Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung,

that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith : that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death ; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect : but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended : but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.' Glorious absorption of the soul ! Sublime supremacy of faith ! No marvel that he could at last exultingly exclaim—'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith ; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me in that day.' The man, thus swallowed up in the high design of life, soars above the insignificant things, the laborious trifling, in which so many waste their energies. He bids away from him the allurements of the world, the blandishments of the flesh, and the enticements of the devil, when they would divert him from his lofty career, by saying—'I am doing a great work, I cannot come down to you.' He feels the great work must be attended to, whatever is neglected—secured, whatever is placed in jeopardy. All that would hinder him in working out his own salvation with fear and trembling, he will cast behind him ; all that is conducive to high enterprise, he will steadily pursue.

Be assured, beloved, that if God enable you to live according to this rule, it will give an earnestness, a reality, a consistency to your life, which nothing else can impart. Time will never hang heavy on your hands ; an object of



surpassing greatness, motives of constraining power, will never be wanting; the commonest duties will be invested with dignity, and the most secular occupations stamped with sacredness. Whatsoever your hand findeth to do, you will do it with your might. You will run for glory—you will toil for immortality.

Need I add, that constancy of purpose will give weight and force to your Christian character? Men will be influenced—wonderfully influenced by it. The world will respect it, even though it should envenom their hatred. Bad men will be overawed and good men emboldened by your example. A fickle Christian belies his principles; a determined one adorns them. He ought to be firm as a rock who has God enthroned within him.

Neither will anything conduce more to a wholesome self-respect and self-confidence than this oneness of design. There is a self-respect and self-reliance which is no better than a proud delusion. But there is a self-respect, springing out of the consciousness of singleness of purpose and of integrity of heart, which, whilst it is consistent with all humility, is essential to holy boldness. Such was the spirit of St. Paul when he said—‘Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience; that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world.’ Assured of the integrity of his heart, as evidenced in the simplicity of his aim, he enjoyed a glorious liberty, a confidence which made him not ashamed.

How little of this sublime determination of Christian purpose is to be met with in the Christian world! How often does the character change with the changing circumstances of life! How frequently do men borrow their tint from the light or shadow which falls upon them, instead of exhibiting the same unvarying colour in the sunshine as in the shade! How many are ‘ever learning, and never able

to come to the knowledge of the truth !' Of multitudes it must be said, as St. Paul said of the Galatians, 'I stand in doubt of you.' In these soft and silken days of lax profession, nothing is more needed in the Church than nerve and bone and sinew—vividness of conviction evinced in steadiness of career. Let there be more of this material in our piety, and the ungodly and the scoffing will acknowledge that God is amongst us of a truth ; the world will bow before the power of the soldiers of the cross. But whilst the children of this world are all earnestness in pursuing their shadows, and we all heartlessness in pursuing our infinite realities, is it to be wondered at that the world should have an overmastering sway, and the Church exert but a feeble influence ? Consistency is mighty ; inconsistency, weak. The Christian ought to be stayed. It is his prerogative to be independent of all things else, because dependent on God alone. It is his privilege to govern circumstances, rather than to be governed by them. It is his, not only to bring every imagination into captivity to the obedience of Christ, but to bring into captivity to that obedience all the vicissitudes of life, all the social influences to which he may be exposed, all the temptations by which he may be assailed. Serving one Master, he will find that service perfect freedom ; free to obey, he will be free indeed.

Young men ! embarked on the waves of business, set your helm for the port of salvation ; steer according to the chart of God's word and by the polar star of faith ; urge on your way, fearless of consequences—regardless of sneers ! He is with you in your bark ; who of old saved the little ship which was tossed on the sea of Galilee. 'Be not afraid ; only believe.' He will keep you from foundering in the billows, or shivering on the rocks ; and will at last moor your vessel safely in the haven, where the 'wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.'

Firmness of purpose should distinguish the Christian in

everything. As in the supreme, so in the subordinate concerns of life, he should be steadfast. There are good men, true to the service of their Saviour, yet irresolute and fitful in their earthly pursuits. This is not as it ought to be:—the good man ought to be a pattern of steadiness in all things—whether in the counting-house or behind the counter, in the workshop or in the sanctuary, in transactions of business or in the endearments of friendship. It is not to the honour of his vocation if he is characterised by infirmity of purpose—if men cannot reckon on his behaviour in the minutest things. Strive to be consistent; aim at a character which is not a piece of patchwork, but a garment of the same weft and warp throughout. This gives weight—dignity—influence. Give no occasion for it to be said that the godly man of business is a fickle or an undiscerning man—that his religion spoils him for the engagements of life. Far from it! A Christian ought to be prescient in design—for Christianity clears the intellect; tenacious in purpose—for Christianity imparts firmness to the judgment; and steady in pursuit—because Christianity sustains the spirit.

Write on your scene of occupation the heavenly rule—‘Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.’ Serve the Lord in your secular concerns, and whatever your hand findeth to do, you will do it with your might. The spring of your activity will always be elastic.

How graceful has been the career of some of our Christian merchants! From the time that they entered on the duties of the counting-house, they walked as became the gospel of Christ: whilst they maintained the inner life of the soul amid all the distraction and bustle of business, they manifested that life in their decision of character, steadiness of purpose, serenity of spirit—their punctuality in all their engagements, and their exactitude in all their transactions. Steering for heaven, they followed one pole-star and pursued one course. Such men are the lights of the exchange

—the moral heroes of commerce. They adorn the Church, and win from the world a reluctant admiration.

My young brethren, be followers of these noble traffickers. 'What your hand findeth to do, do it with your might.' The path of toil is the path to excellence, and the law of diligence is the law of happiness. An indolent man cannot fail to be an unhappy man—a diligent one can scarcely be miserable; such is the law of nature, and the law of nature is the law of God. You must not only lay down plans—you must complete them. Every time you realize a design, you gain fresh moral strength; every time you abandon an undertaking, you impair your self-reliance, you enfeeble the nerve of your soul. It is of vital concern, therefore, in the culture of our spirits—that most essential of all cultivation—that we should always 'be zealously affected in a good thing.' There ought to be no blanks in life—when you have finished one undertaking, begin another. Always have your irons in the fire. If not bound to toil for your bread, take heed that you do not convert this advantage into a snare. Be all the more diligent in doing good; 'to whom much is given, of the same much will be required.' Neither let the man of business, who toiled devotedly in the counting-house or the manufactory, when he retires from business, be less devoted in the prosecution of his heavenly calling, less earnest in 'serving his generation according to the will of God.' The hope of doing good ought to animate you more than all the hopes of successful speculation or accumulating gain. Your zeal is urgently needed. The great necessity of the Church is not money—but men. 'The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few.' We want an earnest Church, to make a happy world. You have no right to live to yourselves. 'No man of us liveth to himself, and no man of us dieth to himself.' Do not provoke the startling question, 'Why stand ye here all the day idle?' Life is all too short for

life's great work. Be not then, like the gay butterfly, that sports in the sunshine and then perishes ; but, like the thrifty bee, that flies to and fro, but it is to gather the sweet store which she treasures up against the winter season, and who, as a consequence, survives in the stormy day. Settle it in your minds, wherever you go, whatever you do, each one for himself—'IN ALL, THROUGH ALL, ABOVE ALL, I MUST WORK OUT MY OWN SALVATION.' 'I must follow my Saviour's steps, and secure my Saviour's approval. A steward, with certain talents committed to me, my one high aim must be to hear my Master say at last, "Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful in a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things ; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."' Let the anticipated sound of these words be ever ringing in your consciences—be ever quickening you to run 'with patience the race that is set before you, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of your faith.' Let not your earthly concerns secularize you, but do you spiritualize them. Convert your worldly avocations into a heavenly discipline. Let them exercise faith, meekness, charity, truth, uprightness ; so may you be strengthening the inner man by the toils of the warehouse as well as by the devotions of the closet and the sanctuary.

Ask, then, beloved, that the Spirit of God would 'give you one heart,' that you may have 'one way.' Energy of faith is the spring of earnestness of life. When the things unseen mightily impress, and the love of Christ mightily constrains, then there will be a lofty decision of character : then will you keep the world, with its impertinencies, its blandishments, its vexations, and its artifices, in the proper place. However it may beset or assail you, whether it threaten or allure, you will meet it with the majestic reply —'I am doing great work, so that I cannot come down ; why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?' 'Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye

steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the good work of the Lord ; forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.' And the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.' ' And I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.' Amen.

## LECTURE VII.

### NEHEMIAH'S UPRIGHTNESS OF DEALING.

'I likewise, and my brethren, and my servants, might exact of them money and corn: I pray you, let us leave off this usury.'—  
NEH. v. 10.

THE perfection of a painting is its keeping. The perfection of a building is its architectural proportion and symmetry. Nothing can make amends for a fault in this respect. As it is in things material, so it is in things moral. The perfection of a character is its unity and congruity. Study the character of Him who presents to us the only spotless character that the world ever beheld—study the character of Immanuel, and you will find that its crowning excellency is its unity and harmony. In speaking of His servants we speak of their distinguishing graces; we cannot so speak in speaking of the Master. He had no distinctive virtues; for distinctive virtues are such as stand out beyond the proportion of the rest. But in Him every virtue was so exquisitely balanced and adjusted, that you cannot say He was more just than true, or more true than charitable, or more charitable than intolerant of evil. In the character of Jesus everything is so symmetrical, that you may compare it to the beautiful bow—that emblem of the covenant of grace—in which all the primitive colours melt into each other with such perfect harmony, that no one of them overshadows another, but all equally delight the eye. Now, just in so far as a follower of Christ attains

to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, will he resemble his Lord in this perfection. He will not be simply a man of prayer, or simply a man of practical integrity; he will be both in lovely unison. He will be in the closet what he is in the market-place, and in the market-place what he is in the closet. He will be before God what he is before man—such, at least, will be his aim. He will never set up one class of duties in opposition to another, nor look upon the performance of some as a counterpoise to the neglect of the rest. His aim and his effort will be to ‘have respect to all’ the commandments of God, from the least to the greatest—if we may presume to graduate precepts which are alike enjoined by the same sovereign authority. Sad is it when men who ‘name the name of Christ’ divorce what God has united; some speaking of themselves as evangelical, in contrast to being moral; and others as being moral, in contrast to being evangelical. Such antagonisms have no place in the economy of grace; they are the figments of human passion and prejudice. According to the glorious gospel, no man is truly moral that is not evangelical, and none honestly evangelical that is not truly moral.

From the root of grace, through the stem of faith, there stretch forth two main branches; the one the love of God, the other the love of our neighbour. From these two shoot out and depend all the ramifications of obedience. Where the one is not, neither is the other; and where the one is found, you may be sure the other is not wanting. How beautifully were they combined in the character of Cornelius! His ‘prayers and his alms came up for a memorial before God;’ there was devotion towards God, there was bountifulness towards man.

We trace the same beautiful combination in the noble character to which your attention is directed. Nehemiah was pre-eminently a man of faith and piety. We have explored the secrets of his closet; we have penetrated into



the recesses of his soul. We have examined the deep spring of all the energy and magnanimity of his career; we have seen how he walked and communed with God. But Nehemiah was a man of probity and charity, no less than of piety and prayer; and we are privileged to contemplate the benign influence of his devotional spirit, and the living efficacy of his godly fear, as manifested in all the diversified duties of secular life—now sustaining him under every difficulty; now emboldening him against every assailant; now securing him from every seduction.

The words to which you have listened are touchingly expressive of his conscious integrity amid circumstances of uncommon temptation. During the erection of the walls of Jerusalem, the people were many of them reduced to sore extremity of want. A large number of them had recently returned from captivity, and, destitute themselves, they came to a country impoverished and desolate.

Besides, it appears that there was a famine in the land, which served to enhance their distress. In their straits, the more indigent were forced to have recourse to the more affluent; and these, taking advantage of the exigencies of their brethren, drove them to desperation by their usurious exactions. Under these circumstances, 'there was a great cry of the people, and of their wives, against their brethren the Jews. For there were that said, We, our sons, and our daughters, are many; therefore we take up corn for them, that we may eat, and live. Some also there were that said, We have mortgaged our lands, vineyards, and houses, that we might buy corn, because of the dearth. There were also that said, We have borrowed money for the king's tribute, and that upon our lands and vineyards.' Nor was this all. They would seem to have been compelled to sell their very children into bondage to their extortionate brethren. For they went on to say, 'Yet, now our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children: and, lo, we

bring into bondage our sons and our daughters to be servants, and some of our daughters are brought into bondage already: neither is it in our power to redeem them; for other men have our lands and vineyards.' Indignant at such oppression, Nehemiah says—'I was very angry when I heard their cry and these words. Then I consulted with myself, and I rebuked the nobles, and the rulers, and said unto them, Ye exact usury, every one of his brother. And I set a great assembly against them; and I said unto them, We, after our ability, have redeemed our brethren the Jews, which were sold unto the heathen; and will ye even sell your brethren? or shall they be sold unto us? Then held they their peace, and found nothing to answer. Also I said, It is not good that ye do: ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the heathen our enemies? I likewise, and my brethren, and my servants, might exact of them money and corn: I pray you, let us leave off this usury.'

Had he been disposed to use them, none had enjoyed greater opportunities, none had possessed more plausible pretexts, for enriching himself at the expense of his helpless brethren, than he had done; but he had been governed by the blessed precept, 'Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do unto them.' Such, then, is the principle brought out in striking illustration by the conduct of this servant of God—an unswerving integrity, proof against all the seductions of earthly gain, all the facilities for taking advantage of others which will present themselves in the course of the transactions of life. No topic could be more practical, none more pertinent to a commercial community, than the topic which is thus brought under our attention. For if the sins that easily beset men vary according to the circumstances that surround them, then the sins which will most easily beset mercantile men will be the sins to which they are specially exposed by their mer-

cantile circumstances. Is it therefore unreasonable to infer, that in a community like ours trespasses against the strict law of uprightness will be peculiarly prevalent? Consequently, the avoidance of such offences will constitute one of the clearest evidences of the sincerity of your godliness, and the commission of them one of the surest signs that you have no religion of the heart. For if you wish to apply a touchstone to character, take this as the most searching—the exercise of those graces which a man is most tempted to neglect, and the eschewal of those iniquities which a man is most tempted to indulge. He who can stand this test is sterling in the sight of God.

Bear with me, therefore, if, in treating so appropriate a subject, I enter into more than ordinary minuteness of detail. Nor deem it a descent from the dignity and solemnity of this holy place, that I should endeavour to carry home that ‘commandment which is exceeding broad’ into all the ramifications of commercial transaction.

Let us, first of all, lay down some of the great principles which ought to sway you in your mercantile career. We shall then strive to point out to you some of the deviations from these principles which are most plausible, and therefore most perilous. We shall afterwards show you how much it behoves you to cleave unswervingly to the path of integrity and truth, despite of every enticement, and in defiance of all that the world may say or do. Meantime, do not misapprehend me, as though I meant to refer to extensive capitalists only—to leading merchants, and manufacturers. My remarks will be no less designed for subordinates than for principals—for the servant than for the master. They will bear alike on all—on the faithful in little, as well as on the faithful in much; on the unjust in little, as well as on the unjust in much. It is not the amount of the gain of injustice that constitutes the sin; it is the deviation from integrity in which the transgression lies.

The first principle by which a Christian tradesman ought to regulate his transactions is—To love his neighbour as himself. ‘Love is the fulfilling of the law;’ ‘love worketh no ill to his neighbour;’ therefore, love secures effectually the accomplishment of the commandment. To love our neighbour as ourselves, is to have the same regard and affection for him that we cherish for ourselves; so that *his* interest, *his* wellbeing, *his* success, shall be dear to us as *our own*; and *his* sorrows, *his* losses, *his* distresses, *his* disappointments shall be felt by us as even *our own*. Will you say—‘This is a standard utterly beyond our attainment?’ It may be beyond your attainment, but it ought not to be beyond your aim—nay, it is a standard which every Christian must strive to reach. We must not lower the precept to our defective attainments, but labour to bring up our attainments to the precept. The authority which binds the injunction upon us, forbids our attempting to relax its stringency. He that said, ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength,’ said also, ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.’ The question therefore is not what we can attain, but what God requires. Perfection must be our goal, though imperfection will be the present result of our efforts. We may love that to which we cannot yet attain, and loathe that from which we cannot yet get wholly free. Ceaselessly ought we to struggle to counteract that selfishness which was the chief cause of the fall, and which so powerfully serves to keep us fallen. We must show no mercy to that desire to make everything contribute to our own pleasure and advantage, irrespectively of the interests of others which has taken such root in our heart. We must deny ourselves that we may benefit others. Self-love must be supplanted by the love of our neighbour. Benevolence can alone subdue the idolatrous love of self.

The next great principle which ought to pervade all

your intercourse with your fellows is—‘Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.’ What condescension in the great Lawgiver that He should not only give us the details of our duty, but that He should also give us sundry summaries of His will—summaries so plain that the simplest reason may understand them, and so compendious that the feeblest memory may retain them! As in commerce you sometimes have an immense sum represented by a small note; so in the Scripture you frequently find a code of morals condensed into a sentence. Thus it is in the golden maxim on which we are dwelling. Only let a man carry out this rule with an honest conscience in his daily transactions, and he will seldom be puzzled with points of casuistry. As on no occasion can it be inapplicable, so on none, if fairly used, can it mislead. No doubt, indeed, it is often perverted and misinterpreted. The poor man distorts it when he holds that it binds the rich man to give him all that he may choose to ask. And the rich misunderstand it when they set it aside as hyperbolic and impracticable. But understand the rule in its twofold bearing, and you will perceive that it acts like the governor or fly-wheel in one of your ingenious pieces of machinery—it maintains the balance between antagonistic forces. Study and cherish that contentment and moderation of mind which will lead you to expect from others only what is fair and reasonable, and then others will have no right to demand from you anything more than what is right and equitable. The precept is designed to control your personal desires, as well as to regulate your dealings with your neighbour. Exorbitant expectation violates the canon, even as it is broken by unrighteous dealing. You see, therefore, that this exquisite principle has a twofold action. It tells upon a man, by moderating his wishes, no less than by influencing his treatment of those with whom he has to do. So, then, you have only to

conform to the rule in its double bearing, and you may steer by it, as by an infallible compass, through all the intricacies of social intercourse.

In fulfilling your duty towards your neighbour, you must cherish a further principle of paramount moment—you must be faithful in the little, even as in the great; you must shrink from the lighter, as well as from the darker shades of dishonesty. He who despises little things, will fall by little and little. The guilt of transgressing is to be measured by the wilfulness, rather than by the extent of the transgression. He who deliberately offends on a small scale, only lacks boldness or opportunity to commit a more flagrant offence. The poor man who defrauds his master of the time for which he is paid, or who uses the property of his employer wastefully, betrays the germ of the grossest dishonesty. On the other hand, the master who, whilst ostentatiously honourable in his transactions with his equals, takes stealthily advantage of his servants, and, instead of giving them 'that which is just and equal,' screws them down to the uttermost in their wages, or exercises his ingenuity in contriving pretexts for abatements from their gains—this man adds hypocrisy to fraudulency. In truth, the best test of godly integrity is the little, not the great. If a man be faithful in the former, he can hardly be unfaithful in the latter. He whose principle it is to avoid grosser whilst he indulges in slighter deviations from uprightness, proves his principle to be earthly, not heavenly—taught by the fear of man, not by the love of God. The Lord estimates the guilt of the trespass, not by the magnitude of the act, but by the defiance of His authority which it involves.

Profane men have dared to sneer at the fact that man lost Paradise and incurred eternal death by partaking of the forbidden fruit; and they have presumed to arraign the punishment as utterly disproportionate to the crime. Yet,

in very deed, the smallness of the temptation may be regarded as the gauge of the depth of faithlessness and rebellion of the creature in disobeying his Creator. The slightness of the inducement to violate the prohibition enhances instead of alleviating the turpitude of the violation. The more gentle the test of loyalty, the more aggravated the heinousness of disloyalty. But if God doomed a world to death for what some deem a small transgression — what shall be thought of the man who makes light of petty dishonesties, and how shall he stand before His judgment-seat who has said, ‘Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all?’

Such, beloved, are the principles which must constitute the platform of your every day’s course and conversation, if you would approve yourselves in His sight, whose you are, and whom you ought to serve. Let me now endeavour, with all faithfulness, to indicate some of the less obvious deviations from these principles, which pass current in the mercantile world, amid all its boasted morality.

In the first place, how common is it for men to defraud society by idleness and self-indulgence! An indolent man is not simply a negative character; he is a positive injury to others. He robs the community of its rights, and God of His service. The ‘slothful servant’ is denounced as a ‘wicked servant’—the man who hid his lord’s money, as having wronged his master. The idle man is a cumberer of the ground; he wastes the soil where a fruitful tree might flourish. Yet how seldom is slothfulness reputed a crime!

Another prevalent, widely ramified, and subtly disguised class of dishonesties, are those which are either committed, or connived at, by public bodies. What, for the most part, more vague and elastic than a corporate conscience? Men will do and sanction in partnership what

they would recoil from in their individual capacity—as though shared responsibility were diminished responsibility, or guilt incurred with a crowd could be cloaked by the crowd. But what saith the Scripture? ‘Every man shall bear his own burden;’ ‘so, then, each one of us shall give account of *himself* to God.’

And as men will deal *in* bodies as they would not individually, so will they deal *with* bodies as they would not with individuals. How much equivocation, chicanery, and subterfuge, is practised in relation to the claims of *civil government*? By many to elude those claims is thought to be at most a venial fault. Yet God Himself has vindicated the rights of the community. ‘Tribute to whom tribute is due;’ ‘custom to whom custom,’ is His decision. The very same law that binds a man not to cheat his neighbour, forbids him to cheat the commonwealth, which throws its shield around his life and property. ‘The powers that be are ordained of God;’ and He who instituted the powers ordained the means for their maintenance. Yet, obvious as is the duty of submitting cheerfully to the impositions of the state, you cannot be conversant with the ways of the world, and not know how extensively taxes are evaded, how frequently false returns of property are made, how artfully the Excise and the Customs are in numberless instances defrauded. You are aware with what skill and adroitness some who thus practise deceit contrive to elude detection; whilst others, glorying in their shame, will even plume themselves on the cleverness they have displayed in cheating the revenue.—Cleverness! It is a cleverness from beneath.

Contemplate another field of fraud, less startling, and therefore more insidious, than the former. By selfish extravagance, or rash speculations, what numbers subject themselves to liabilities which their resources do not warrant, or plunge into debts which they have no prospect of discharging! It is not uncommon for the commercial



world to be shaken—convulsed—dislocated—by the gambling spirit which seems periodically to take possession of it, impelling men to stake all upon a throw. In their haste to be rich, they leave principle and prudence behind them. Bent on their own enrichment, they have no regard for the interests of others. No doubt there is a wholesome enterprise in business which ought not to be discouraged, and to which a certain range and latitude must be accorded ; but when that range and latitude entrench on the rights of others, they entrench, however stealthily, on the law of God. It is not enough that a man's intentions are honest—his measures must be prudent. Whilst integrity actuates, wisdom must restrain. I do not deny that a man of integrity may be unsuccessful in his plans, that insolvency may overtake him unawares ; he may find himself involved in difficulties which he could not avert, and embarrassments which he could not foresee ; and he may shine all the more brightly by his conduct in such circumstances. But when a man launches out into speculations far beyond the margin of his capital, or when he indulges in a style of living which he has no income to justify, then, at once, is he making shipwreck of uprightness, he is sacrificing others to himself. 'Owe no man anything,' is as much a divine precept as 'Thou shalt not steal,' or as 'Thou shalt do no murder.' Fearful is the amount of inconsistency which when tried by this standard many who name the name of Christ betray ; by reason of whom 'the way of truth is evil spoken of,' and the gainsayer is hardened in his unbelief. Brethren, 'let us judge ourselves' in these things, 'that we be not judged of the Lord.' 'Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that which he alloweth.'

Then, again, how diversified the deceptions practised in trade for the purpose of taking advantage of the purchaser ! Inferior articles are made to wear a superior appearance ;

old and damaged goods are vamped up, and glossed over, that they may pass for new; domestic manufactures are sold as foreign; the names of certain makers are attached to articles which they never made; false representations are given of the cost of produce, or of the state of the markets; the unpractised dealer is charged more than the accomplished trafficker; prices are regulated by what can be obtained, rather than by the real worth of that which is sold. These things are the curse and canker of business—they indicate a moral leprosy which taints the community. How hardly shall a faithful tradesman keep himself pure! How great watchfulness he requires, that he may not be ‘partaker of other men’s sins!’

On the other hand, how frequently will the buyer avail himself of the necessities of the seller; force him to forego his legitimate profit; or disparage and depreciate his goods, in order that he may beat down their price! It is still, as it was in the days of the wise man—‘It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer; but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth.’

And what shall we say of the various ways in which articles of merchandise are adulterated? The production of spurious and counterfeit goods forms an extensive branch of manufacture. And to such a pitch has this species of fraud been carried in some departments, that only a few years ago, I was assured by a Christian tradesman, that in the line of business in which he was engaged, there were not more than three or four firms with whom he was acquainted, who did not adulterate the article by which he gained his living, so that he found it most difficult to stand his ground against such fraudulent competition. In all this a twofold guilt is incurred—the guilt of dishonesty, and the guilt of deceit. To cover the violation of the eighth commandment, the ninth is tacitly, if not expressly, violated. A lie is acted, if it be not uttered; and an acted lie is at least as bad as a

spoken lie. Nor is this all ;—the subordinates are usually implicated in the guilt of the principals ; indeed the latter will sometimes require the former to do what they would shrink from doing themselves. Pitiful subterfuge ! What a man does by another he does himself ; yea, and such employers are far more criminal than the agents whom they employ. Not content with serving Satan themselves, they become his allies in enslaving their dependants. Not satisfied with selling their own conscience, they traffic in the consciences of others. As though it were not enough to practise deceit, they become manufacturers of deceivers.

Bear with me, beloved. I accuse no man. I judge no man. I speak strongly because I feel strongly. These things are too notorious to be denied, too flagrant for the minister of God to pass them over in silence.

Nor is the dark catalogue of social injustice yet filled up. How often do masters oppress the servant and the hireling in their wages ! Instead of 'giving them that which is equal and right,' they strive to beat and screw down their hire to the uttermost—taking advantage of their necessities. Yet if there be one kind of fraud more dastardly, dishonourable, and aggravated than another, it is that which wrests from the labouring man the fair recompense of the sweat of his brow—the very price of his sinews, his flesh, and his blood. 'The Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified.' Is it not notorious that in too many instances wages are the first, instead of the last, thing to be retrenched when times are unfavourable ? Are not employers, with some honourable exceptions, far more ready to lower wages when trade is bad, than to raise them when trade is good ? How seldom do the workmen share proportionably in the prosperity of their master ! Hardest and meanest of all is it, when, as is sometimes the case, under the pretext that his work has been damaged or *deficient*, heavy abatements of the remuneration of his toil

are forced on the hapless artisan, who has no alternative but to submit to the wrong, or to be thrown out of employment. At all events, little hope can the poor and the weak have in contending against the rich and the strong. As a consequence, there often follows a fearful retaliation; the work-people, smarting under unmerited imputations, and goaded on by a sense of wrong, take the law into their own hands, and fancy that they are warranted to do what they have been falsely charged with doing, and are justified in taking stealthily what they ought in fairness to receive. Thus, injustice on the one side begets injustice on the other. But it must not be forgotten, that, however guilty the dependant who has in this way been disciplined into dishonesty, sevenfold heavier is his guilt who made him dishonest. How would all this be averted, if, only and always, the master were to deal with the servant, and the servant with the master, as each would desire to be dealt with by the other were their relation inverted!

Much shade might still be added to the dark picture we have painted, were we to explore the ramified injustice and unfaithfulness which so often disgrace trusteeships and executorships. What sad scenes and stories here crowd on the mind:—the interests of the helpless and dependent cruelly neglected, the confidence which friendship reposed in the undeserving, shamefully betrayed. Oh! how do the sighs of the widow and the tears of the fatherless cry, and their ‘cries are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth?’ Fearful must be the retribution which awaits those who, instead of defending the cause of the fatherless and widow, take advantage of their weakness to bereave and oppress them. But I will not pursue this melancholy train of illustration any further. Enough has been said to remind you of the perils which beset you in your social relationships, and to warn you that you must not ‘walk according to the course of this world.’

Rather let me remind you how beautiful and blessed would be the state of society if all this were reversed—if, instead of the sordid maxim of the worldling holding true, ‘Where you find a man’s interest, there you will find the man,’ it could be said universally, ‘Where you find a man’s duty, there you will find the man.’ Why should it not be so with us all? Secular interest itself demands it at our hand. Honesty is the best policy. In the long run, the upright man will ordinarily be the successful man. Or, if he be not prosperous here, it is because God has better things in store for him hereafter, and trains him by earthly discipline, for an enduring and undefiled inheritance. At all events, he will enjoy the melody of the testimony of a conscience void of offence—a melody which can gladden the home of guileless penury, but for lack of which, the costly mansion of fraud will have no true gladness. ‘Better a dinner of herbs,’—the fruit of integrity,—than ‘a stalled ox,’ embittered by guilt: yea, and often even in this world God sets His brand on the gains of dishonesty. It is no uncommon thing to see wealth which had been doubtfully accumulated, melt away like snow before the summer’s sun. Or else to find that the usurious owner had heaped up riches and could not tell who should gather them; for either he leaves no descendants to inherit his wealth, or else his posterity squander in profligacy the stores for which he had sacrificed his conscience and his soul. Far more frequently than the heedless notice, is it thus made manifest that ‘doubtless there is a God that judgeth in the earth.’

A few more practical suggestions, and I must close. How vain his expectation who hopes by meeting the requirements of the law to stand acquitted before God! Tried even by his favourite table—that which enjoins his duty towards man—is he not daily adjudged to be guilty? Can he plead that he has always from his heart loved his neighbour as himself, or done in all things to others as he would

have others do to him? Is it possible for self-love so to blind him, that he should venture so to plead? But if he cannot justify himself in relation to the law as bearing upon his conduct towards his fellow-creatures, how can he hope to justify himself in relation to the law as bearing upon his conduct towards his Creator? Surely, then, 'by deeds of the law shall no man living be justified.' Surely, 'by the law is the knowledge of sin.' Surely, 'the law is a school-master to bring us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith;' for 'He is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.' Surely, none can stand before the Judge of quick and dead, except that Judge have 'blotted out as a thick cloud his transgressions, and as a cloud his sins.'

At the same time, it must never be forgotten, that there will be repentance towards God wherever there is 'faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.' Fruits meet for repentance will follow. Where you have done wrong, you will strive to do so no more; and where you can make reparation, reparation will be made. 'Behold, Lord,' said the penitent and believing Zaccheus, 'the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.' Then said Jesus, 'This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham'—a son, not only after the flesh, but also 'after the Spirit,' because possessed of the living faith of Abraham—a faith fruitful in all good works. Beloved, aim high. Do not, I entreat you, come down to the standard of the world, but strive to attain to the standard of Christ. Remember, that if ye are Christ's, 'ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people.' What then do ye more than others? In the counting-house or on the exchange, in the manufactory or in the workshop, let men 'take knowledge of you that you have been with Jesus—not by your talking about religion out of place, but by

your acting on its principles and carrying out its precepts in all your dealings and relations. Impregnate the ordinary business of life with the spirit of the gospel. 'Be not partakers of other men's sins.' 'Keep yourselves pure.' Ask not what is customary, but what is right. In pursuing such a course, you may have to suffer from unscrupulous competition, you may have to forego tempting advantages, you may see no prospect of secular success—but be not anxious. Endure to the end. Bear in mind what the prophet answered the King of Judah when he asked, 'But what shall we do for the hundred talents which I have given to the army of Israel?'—'The Lord is able to give you much more than this.' So, reckon that He whom you serve can give you manifold more than you lose for His sake, even in this world, and in the world to come life everlasting. Above all, realize that as it would profit you nothing to gain the whole world and lose your own soul, so it will disadvantage you little if you lose the whole world and save your own soul. Let your treasure be in heaven.

'Let integrity be the guide of your life.' 'If riches increase, set not your heart upon them;' if they diminish, let not your heart be troubled. How much better is honourable poverty than dishonourable opulence! Woe to the 'men of the world, who have their portion in this world;' but blessed are they who are, 'as poor, yet making many rich, as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.'

There are few characters more honourable or more useful than that of the Christian man of business who sets an example of truth, of uprightness, and of diligence; and who labours to have a conscience void of offence towards God and man. Mercantile men of this description are the salt of the commercial world, and 'the substance' of the nation. God grant that the mercantile men of this flock may be numbered amongst them!

## LECTURE VIII.

### NEHEMIAH'S FORTITUDE IN DUTY.

‘And I said, Should such a man as I flee? and who is there, that, being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in.’—NEH. vi. 11.

THOSE of us who have been baptized in the national Church, were signed at our baptism with the sign of the cross, ‘in token that we should not thereafter be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under His banner, against sin, the world, and the devil, and to continue Christ’s faithful soldiers and servants unto our lives’ end.’ We were pledged therefore, to fight as soldiers, as well as to obey as servants. Indeed, we cannot do the one except we do the other. For no man can serve God in this wicked world unless he contend, in order that he may obey. But in a soldier there is no quality so shameful as cowardice, and none so essential as courage. A cowardly soldier has no right to be in the army—a cowardly Christian has no right to be enrolled under the standard of the Captain of our salvation. Hence it is, that when St. Peter enumerates the chief graces which we are to give all diligence to attain, he places fortitude next to faith: ‘Giving all diligence,’ says he, ‘add to your faith *virtue*,’—the primitive sense of the word employed in the original is *valour*; even as in the Latin tongue, and in our own language, the word virtue originally sig-



nified courage—an expressive fact, which indicates how closely the two qualities are allied. The Spirit of God thus proves, that the next thing to believing in Christ in order that we may be saved, is boldness, through Christ, to avow that belief; for ‘with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.’ If there be not, therefore, the courage to avouch Christ with the lip and in the life, the seal and superscription of the faith that saves are lacking.

Distinguished as he was for other graces of the Spirit, the noble man whose character forms the platform of our course of instruction to men of business was especially illustrious for his holy intrepidity. Nehemiah was a man of surpassing magnanimity; he never flinched, never faltered, in carrying out what God had assigned him to do. And as the Lord never gives special grace but He specially exercises it, he allowed the courage of this champion of His people to be tried by a succession of assaults the most intimidating, stratagems the most subtle, and conspiracies the most treacherous. He suffered him to be beset by such a diversity of temptations that nothing but omnipotent strength could have enabled him to come off more than conqueror over them all, and to finish triumphantly the work which God had commissioned him to fulfil. We have already called your attention to his unwavering determination in duty. You have heard his glorious reply to his enemies when they would have distracted his attention from his work, and, under pretences of friendship, seduced him into the plain of Ono: ‘I am,’ said he, ‘doing a great work, I cannot come down; why should the work stand still while I come down to you?’ A still more crafty snare was laid for him, where it was most to be feared because least to be suspected—amongst false brethren; for, as Satan is most to be dreaded when he comes in the likeness of an angel of light, so are his ministers most formidable when they assume the same disguise. Nehemiah

had gone, it would appear, for counsel or comfort into the house of one who was reputed a prophet, but who was in reality such a prophet as Balaam was ; he had gone into the house of Shemaiah, the son of Delaiah, the son of Mehetabeel, ' who was shut up,' as though afraid for his life—probably in pursuance of a plot into which he had been induced to enter by Sanballat and Tobiah—and this false friend said unto him, ' Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us shut the doors of the temple : for they will come to slay thee ; yea, in the night will they come to slay thee.' He insinuated that it would be unsafe for them to hold converse in his dwelling ; but that if they sought the temple as a sanctuary, and closed the doors about them, there they would be in security. His design, however, was not to serve, but to ensnare Nehemiah ; to shake his strong confidence in the protection of God, and beguile him into doubtful and dastardly expedients ; that so the hands of the workmen might be weakened in their work, and the enemies of Israel have occasion to reproach the leader of the people, as having been entangled like a bird in the snare of the fowler. But holy courage has always heavenly wisdom for her companion. Nehemiah, therefore, penetrating the hypocrisy of the tempter, and lending no fond ear to the whispers of a faithless expediency, answered with sublime serenity, ' Should such a man as I flee ? and who is there, that, being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life ? I will not go in.'

Then he added, ' And, lo, I perceived that God had not sent him ; but that he pronounced this prophecy against me : for Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. Therefore was he hired, that I should be afraid, and do so, and sin, and that they might have matter for an evil report, that they might reproach me. My God, think thou upon Tobiah and Sanballat according to these their works, and on the prophetess Noadiah, and the rest of the prophets, that would

have put me in fear.' Noble was the sentiment of this soldier of faith! Was it for such a man as he—commissioned of God—his strength in the Spirit of God—the leader of the peculiar people whom the Lord had brought up out of captivity—pledged to the achievement of a great work which God had already signally prospered—a work begun, continued, and to be ended in the divine name;—was it for such a man, so circumstanced, so favoured, so exalted—was it for him to flee into the temple—'afraid of man, who is a worm, and of the son of man, who is a worm?' There was sublimity in the sentiment of Cæsar, though he spoke in the pride of his heart, when, being expostulated with on adventuring himself in a frail bark on a stormy sea because there was urgency in his errand, he said—'It is not necessary that I should live, but it is necessary that I should go.' This calmness of resolve had something grand in it; but it fades into insignificance when compared with the moral grandeur of the spirit of Nehemiah, who, fearing God, feared nought beside—who, absorbed in the thought of duty, never indulged the thought of danger. It is the champion of the cross who can say and has a right to say, 'The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom then shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom then shall I be afraid? I will not flee. My life I can surrender, but I cannot surrender my duty.'

You see therefore, beloved, what a model, in this view, is here presented for your imitation. Mingling, as you necessarily do, in scenes of secular distraction; brought into contact, day by day, with worldly and ungodly men; occupying your business in the midst of those who deride your principles and lie in wait to betray you; breathing an atmosphere charged with false sentiments, false maxims, false feelings—how much you need to add to your faith, virtue—to see to it, that while you are 'not slothful in business, but *fervent in spirit, serving the Lord,*' you are also 'strong and

of a good courage,' fighting manfully under the banner of your Lord, and confessing Him before men. May His Spirit attend us whilst we enlarge on this high attribute of Christian character!

The nature of holy courage must be analysed, in order that we may not misunderstand its elements. It is not that natural bravery which belongs to some men constitutionally. This quality, if you examine it, resolves itself into little more than strength of nerve and robustness of animal spirits. It is found largely amongst our soldiery, and, in a thousand instances, apart from Christian principle. It is rather the bravery of the lion than the bravery of the mind and the man. There is, however, a courage of a far higher order—that which springs from a sense of honour, from a proud disdain of what is mean and pusillanimous—which dreads a spot more than a wound—a reproach more than a calamity. In this there is much that is specious and lovely, yet is it, after all, a plant of earthly growth—fair, but without abiding root. This is the heroism which captivates the world. They can appreciate; they can admire it. They make it their standard; they talk rapturously of heroes; they well-nigh worship them. But, after all, such heroism, when weighed in the balances of Holy Scripture, is found utterly wanting. It is lacking in universality of influence—it is lacking in personal subjugation. Hence it is by no means uncommon to find a man who can conquer in battle, conquered himself in the struggle with his own nature; to find the victor vanquished, and the warrior who led others into captivity, taken captive by his own corruptions. Some of the most valorous have been the most depraved; and some who dragged their enemies at their chariot-wheels, have themselves been dragged through the mire of pollution by their own appetites and passions. The history of the world furnishes a thousand proofs that the hero of the battle-field is not always a hero in private life, and that worldly honour

cannot save a man from sensual bondage. As water cannot rise higher than its level, neither can a moral quality rise higher than its principle. Earthly valour cannot raise a man above the earth. But the courage of a Christian springs from the fear of God—from 'seeing him who is invisible'—from realizing His omnipotent sovereignty—from prizing His favour more than life, and dreading His displeasure more than death. Hence, the soldier of Christ is fearless to do right, fearful to do wrong—afraid to sin, but not afraid to suffer. He dares not deviate from honesty, but he dares encounter loss for being honest; he dares not tell a lie, but he dares to suffer for speaking the truth; he dares not 'make a mock at sin,' but he dares set at nought the mockery of sinners; he dares not 'follow the multitude to do evil,' but he dares to follow the commandments of God though the whole world should threaten or assail. This exalted grace is exercised, not more in withstanding the evil that is without, than in overcoming the evil that is within; it displays itself most decisively in the believer's warfare with self; its noblest achievements are achievements on the battle-field of the heart. Its exploits are often unknown, save to God and conscience. Its triumphs are chronicled in the archives of heaven.

The need and scope for this virtue amid the ordinary occupations of life, claim special attention. People are apt when we speak of courage, to think of battle and of peril, and when we speak of fortitude, to think of bonds and imprisonments—the confessor's tortures, and the martyr's stake. But heavenly heroism, whether it be active or passive, is constantly called into play where the world has no conception that it can be exerted. It is essential in order that a man may do the will of God—for to do that will is to master our own will; and in order that we may 'be spiritually minded, which is life and peace,' we must *mortify the* 'the carnal mind, which is enmity against God.'

He, therefore, that will be a follower of God must take up arms against himself—he must enter into habitual conflict with his own nature. The very terms of his enlistment under the Captain of his salvation are ‘to deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Christ.’ But to do this—to crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts—to keep the body under, and to bring it into subjection—holding it down, as the wrestler does his antagonist when he has got him undermost, despite of all his spasmodic struggles to rise—yea, and not to wrestle against flesh and blood only, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against ‘spiritual wickedness in high places’—to ‘quench all the fiery darts of the wicked,’ and face all the artillery of hell—all this requires a mighty moral valour indeed:—a courage—how far surpassing all the daring of the earthly warrior; ‘He that ruleth his own spirit is greater than he that taketh a city,’ and he that conquers himself than he that conquers a kingdom. It was finely said by Richard Cecil, that ‘a humble Christian, battling against the world, the flesh, and the devil, is a greater hero than Alexander the Great.’ No doubt he is in the sight of angels. His record is on high. ‘He shall be a pillar in the temple of his God.’ Meanwhile, however, how protracted often, how wearying, the warfare! There must be no truce—no suspension of hostilities. It will last while life lasts—it can be finished only when we finish our course and ‘enter into the joy of our Lord.’

Besides, it requires a courageous spirit to have respect to all God’s commandments. They are very short, but they are ‘exceeding broad.’ They extend to every thought and word and work, to every movement of the inner and every act of the outer man. The law of God is like the atmosphere we breathe—it encompasses us always and everywhere. But always and everywhere to strive after conformity to it—at whatever cost, risk, sacrifice, or suffering—what holy

intrepidity does this demand! Well might Joshua, when he was taking leave of the hosts of the Lord, say to them, 'Be ye therefore very courageous'—for what purpose? To vanquish their enemies?—to root out the remnant of the Canaanities? No—but 'to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses.' Courage was required by them to obey rather than to fight, to subdue themselves, rather than to discomfit the Hittite and the Perizzite. Let them do the former, and the latter would follow. Examine the history of Israel, and you will find it a commentary on this truth. Never were they faithful to the Lord—but their enemies fled; never were they unfaithful to Him—but their enemies triumphed over them. 'The battle is not to the strong.' Surrounding Jericho at God's command, the walls fell prostrate, without a sword having been drawn or an arrow shot—going against Ai when they had provoked the Lord to anger, they were smitten down before the men of that insignificant city.

It is further requisite that the servant of Christ should be of a good courage, in order that he may overcome the world—in order that he may not be 'conformed to' it, but 'transformed by the renewing of his mind.' He is not of the world, even as his Master is not of the world. Jesus 'gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from the present evil world.' It is true the religion from Christ does not lie in singularity; yet, even in this land, we are strangers to living Christianity unless we are singular. For the multitude of those amongst us who bear the Christian name, are as truly of the world as are the pagans, in heathen lands, who do not even know that name. Hence, those who have the mind that was in Christ cannot fail to be 'a peculiar people' in the midst of Christendom, even as they would be in the midst of Paganism. The features which distinguish them from those by whom they are surrounded may not be so *palpable* in the one case as in the other; but they are not on

that account, less real. The children of God, wherever they dwell, must, in spirit and character, 'come out from amongst' the world 'and be separate.' They dare not 'walk according to its course'—else they would walk 'according to the prince of the power of the air.' 'They are crucified to the world, and the world to them.' Their path is narrow, and therefore their fellow-travellers are few. They must welcome the world's frown, rather than court its smile. 'If they were of the world, the world would love its own; but because they were not of the world, for Christ has chosen them out of the world, therefore the world hateth them.' If we bear His image, we shall share His 'reproach.' For, though some think that the beauty of virtue must captivate, and the loveliness of holiness disarm, all—yet when He who was virtue embodied, and holiness impersonated, walked the world, instead of being captivated by the beauty of His holiness, and ravished by the loveliness of His virtue, the men of the world hated Him, and mocked Him, and scourged Him, and buffeted Him, and spat upon Him, and crowned Him with thorns, and crucified Him. Such was the world's appreciation of the excellency of virtue, and the perfection of holiness! And if they persecuted Christ, will they not persecute His people?—if they called the master of the house Beelzebub, will they not much more call them of His household? The more closely we resemble our Lord, the more shall we be honoured with the world's enmity. The 'offence of the cross' hath not ceased. If we escape the offence, it must be by hiding the cross. Strange, that whilst Mahometans and Pagans glory in their shame, and never think of blushing to own their superstitions—Christians should so often be ashamed of their glory! Mysterious evidence that the cross is of God!—Paganism never provokes the enmity of the carnal mind; it is the cross that stirs its antipathy. Here, therefore, is a wide field for Christian courage. To confess Christ before men, to glory



in His cross, to identify ourselves with His people—this is hard to flesh and blood—harder to many than to face the cannon's mouth. 'The fear of man bringeth a snare;'—the fear of his frown, his contempt, his ridicule, his scorn—how often does this false feeling ensnare the soul! The vaunted valour of the world betrays its hollowness here. He who will rush on the battle's edge, dares not face the sneer of fools. In defiance of conscience and the fear of God, he will stand to murder, or to be murdered—lest he should be branded as a coward. What pusillanimous bravery! What dishonourable honour! In noble contrast was the spirit of that man of holy intrepidity—'Colonel Gardner;' who, when challenged to a duel, answered majestically, 'You know I am not afraid to fight, but I am afraid to sin.' Still more sublime was the conduct of another illustrious soldier, who—when a rash and insolent young man, after having in vain challenged him out for the purpose of provoking him to fight, first went so far as to strike him, and then to spit in his face—at length, calmly took out his handkerchief, and wiping his cheek, said solemnly—'Young man, if I could as easily wipe your blood from my conscience as I do this from my face, I would chastise your insolence.' No marvel that the youth, stung to the quick by such magnanimity, fell on his knees and craved forgiveness. That was a glorious victory! The Christian hero, by conquering himself, conquered his enemy; so fulfilling the precept, 'Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.' The world's heroes overcome evil with evil—and therefore are vanquished; the Christian hero overcomes evil with good—and therefore is more than conqueror.

And let it not be supposed that in the daily and commonplace pursuits of your callings there is no scope for the exercise of this grace. In its lowlier and less impressive, but not less important, exercises, it is frequently *called into play*. Occasions for its manifestation occur

where the unbelieving never perceive them. For instance—you are a commercial man, and you have to do with men who, in the transactions of business, adopt certain principles, and pursue a certain line of policy, which, though consistent with the world's standard of morality, is not in harmony with the high demands of scriptural integrity: in such a case, there can be no doubt what path you must choose; yet in choosing it, you will not only have to forego a seeming advantage, but you will also have to provoke the dislike, if not the censure, of those whom by your choice you will tacitly rebuke. You will be thought, if you are not called, precise, puritanical, wanting in spirit and enterprise—never likely to succeed in the world. Here moral courage is brought into requisition, in order to embolden you to encounter resentment and contempt, to stem the current of custom, and brave the strictures of the oracles of trade. Or, perhaps, you are a servant, accustomed to submit to your employer, dependent upon him for your daily bread—you are required to act deceitfully or to concur in dishonesty, or to profane the day of holy rest: your situation is at stake if you refuse; yet you must 'not be a partaker of other men's sins;' you must obey God rather than man. Now, therefore, the fortitude of faith must intervene; you must trust in God, cleave to that which is right, and commit the issue to His hands. Or it may be that your ordinary avocations compel you to mingle with profane, impure, and licentious men, whose mouths are full of uncleanness and ungodliness—you breathe a tainted atmosphere, like that of Sodom and Gomorrah—what courageous resolution it requires to keep yourself, like Lot in Sodom, undefiled by the pollution which encompasses you, to own Christ where all deny Him, and glory in His cross where all pour contempt on His name! What but a strength made perfect in weakness, can keep you pure amid surrounding impurity—reverential amid surrounding profaneness—truthful amid *surrounding deceit!*

But you may be called—*some are* called, *multitudes have been* called—to severer tests of holy fortitude than these. ‘All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.’ Few, however, have in these latter days drunk deeply of the bitter cup. But there is reason to think that it is filling again for the faithful. The indications of prophecy, and the aspects of Christendom seem alike to betoken a return of fiery trial for the righteous.

Already, on the continent, as in the case of the Madii, and of other meek confessors, ‘the man of sin’ is threatening to wield again that sword which, though forced for a season to sheathe, he never laid aside. Everywhere he is grasping at political power under the guise of spiritual authority, and only let him—either by himself, or in alliance with infidelity—acquire a more complete ascendancy, and the fires of persecution will again blaze, and new ranks be added to ‘the noble army of martyrs.’ Are we prepared for the ordeal?—Were the tempest to rise—how much chaff would it sweep from the threshing-floor of the church—how little wheat would it leave there! Were the furnace to be heated—how much shining dross would be consumed—how little fine gold would remain only purified by the flame! At all events, though we may never be called upon to share the martyr’s crown, we are called upon to imbibe the martyr’s spirit. No man can be Christ’s who has not the spirit of a martyr. For what is the martyr’s spirit? Is it not to count all things but dung, so that Christ may be won?—And can any win Christ without so estimating Him? Nay, verily, for He Himself has declared—‘If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.’ So to hate—is to be a martyr in heart. And let us not forget, that he who has this mind will show it in the little as he would in the great, in the calm as he would in *the storm*, in enduring the contradiction of sinners as he *would in confronting the rack or the stake*.

It is clear then, beloved, that there is a wide range for the display of godly courage in your ordinary walk and warfare. You will daily have occasion to repel the suggestions of carnal policy, the insinuations of worldly wisdom, and the promptings of unbelief, by protesting, with Nehemiah, 'Should such a man as I flee? and who is there, that, being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in.'

How ennobling this spirit! Even natural valour has something grand in it; but the heavenly heroism of him who fears God, and therefore fears none else, possesses a majesty which bespeaks it divine—the rather, because it is often displayed by the naturally timid and weak, yea, even by little children. As it is written: 'O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth! who hast set Thy glory above the heavens. Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast Thou ordained strength, that Thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.' So, of the great 'cloud of witnesses,' whose exploits are chronicled in the eleventh chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews—how many were frail and faint!—but 'out of weakness they were made strong;' omnipotent strength was made perfect in their weakness;—hence, though but worms of the dust, they threshed mountains, or sustained worlds. 'When I am weak,' said the great apostle, 'then am I strong.' And can the archives of the world exhibit any grandeur of soul to be compared with Paul's? In the near prospect of 'bonds and imprisonments,' he said: 'But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself; so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.' And, in the immediate view of a cruel death, he exclaimed: 'I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness,

which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day.' Equally sublime was the bearing of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, when—as the burning fiery furnace blazed before them, and the infuriate tyrant overwhelmed them with threatenings—they calmly answered, 'O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.' No marvel that they overcame their furious persecutor, and wrung from his heart admiration of their conduct and adoration of their God. No quality adds so much weight and dignity to Christian character as this quality. The timid, trimming, compromising, inconstant professor disgraces the banner under which he marches, and betrays the Captain whose name he bears. The very world, which snares or seduces him from his steadfastness, will be the first to despise him when it shall have entangled him, and to speak of him and exult over him as fallen. In *their* estimation, therefore, he was exalted when he would not come down to them—he will have degraded himself by fearing their fear and coveting their applause. When he would not flee into the temple to save his life, then the world respected whilst it hated him : but when betrayed into hiding himself in 'refuges of lies,' the world sets him at nought. 'Their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges.'

And what a blessed confidence and liberty does this virtue give the soul! 'The wicked fleeth when no man pursueth ; but the righteous is bold as a lion.' 'Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear ; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father.' 'God hath not given us the spirit of fear ; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.' Pray for much

of this spirit. Numbers are held back from following Christ fully through a cowardly shame. Well might Bunyan in his 'Pilgrim's Progress' say, 'No enemy so belied his name as Shame; for he was the most shameless villain, that hung upon the pilgrim's steps, and clung to him to the last.' Many would fain come to Jesus, like Nicodemus, by night. They are afraid of losing social caste and position; they are ashamed of being numbered among 'fools and fanatics;' they covet the crown, but they shrink from the cross. Be ashamed of such shame—be afraid of such fear. 'Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts. Let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread.' If you suffer, you shall also reign with Him; if you deny Him, He also will deny you.' There is special need, beloved, that we should admonish you, who occupy your business in the midst of a world that lieth in wickedness, to be more than ever 'valiant for the truth;'—that we should address you as St. Paul did the Corinthians, 'Watch ye; stand fast in the faith; quit you like men; be strong.' Our age is one of compromise and concession. A pitiful, dastardly spirit of expediency has set aside the sway of stern and sterling principle:—from our statesmen and legislators, down through all ranks of the community, the canker of liberalism has diffused itself; truth is sacrificed to peace, and wisdom to selfish policy. Beware of this leaven. Hold fast the 'wisdom which is *first pure*, then peaceable.' Judge all things by the Bible. Assert its supremacy *in* all things and *over* all things. Smile at the charge of bigotry and blindness. 'Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for Christ's sake.'

To you, my younger brethren, just launching forth on the sea of public life—to you more especially would I address myself. At your age, the mind is most keenly alive to opinion, the heart most sensitive to reproach and contempt. Many a hopeful youth has been laughed out of his

conscience, and bantered out of his character. You, therefore, peculiarly need moral courage. Fear—that you may not fear. Fear God—that you may not fear man. Harken to the voice of your ‘Leader and Commander:’ ‘Fear not them who, after that they have killed the body, have no more that they can do; but I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear. Fear Him which, after He hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear Him.’ ‘Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.’ Take for your models the glorious examples of youthful heroism with which Scripture abounds. Imitate Joseph, who braved danger, but dared not sin against God. Copy Daniel, whom the den of lions could not affright—who would not so much as cloak his fidelity to the Lord. Be followers of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who smiled at the burning fiery furnace—enduring, ‘as seeing Him who is invisible.’ Imitate St. Paul, who ‘conferred not with flesh and blood, and counted all things but dung, so that he might win Christ, and be found in Him.’ Above all, strive to resemble Him who ‘endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God;’ Him who said, ‘To him that evercometh, will I grant to sit with Me on My throne; even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father on His throne.’ ‘Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!’

## LECTURE IX.

### NEHEMIAH'S JOY IN SERVING GOD.

‘The joy of the Lord is your strength.’—NEH. viii. 10.

‘THIS is the day which the Lord hath made ; we will rejoice and be glad in it.’ So sang the sweet singer of Israel when he beheld the Christian Sabbath—the *Lord’s* day, yet a great way off. He that does not this day rejoice, knows nothing of true joy. If the ordinary day of rest be radiant with gladness, how much more the day when Jesus rose—the mother of Christian Sabbaths !\* He knows nothing of genuine Christianity who does not know it as the well-spring of happiness. For what is the gospel ? It is the revelation of God’s plan for making man happy again. If it have accomplished this in us, it has accomplished its design—this frustrated in us, its purpose has been defeated. Away, then, with the lie and libel which Satan has forged, and the world has fostered—that the service of Christ is a service of gloom and sadness. It has its own sorrows, but it has its own joys ; it has inquietudes peculiar to itself, but it has a peace all its own ; and its peace passeth all understanding, and its joy is ‘unspeakable, and full of glory.’ It is of this joy Nehemiah spake in the words to which you have hearkened ; and so appropriate are they to the high festival which we are keeping, that I have seen no reason to deviate from this stated course of instruction, on account of the day. The spirit of

\* Preached on Easter Sunday.



the subject on which we are to enlarge, is in beautiful harmony with the spirit of the season. May the 'oil of joy' be shed abundantly on such as are true of heart, whilst we dwell on our blessed theme!

The following are the circumstances which gave rise to the sentiment. The wall of Jerusalem was speedily finished, for the people had a mind to work. Upon its completion, Israel were gathered together out of all their cities, and a joyful assembly was held. As a part of the solemnities of the occasion, the disused and almost forgotten law of God was brought forth; and Ezra the scribe was commissioned, in company with sundry of the priests and Levites, to read and expound it in the hearing of the congregated multitude, who all stood up when he opened the book. In order that he might be seen and heard of the people, he was set aloft on a platform, or pulpit of wood—as our translators render the original word. (An interesting circumstance, because presenting the first instance recorded in Scripture of the use of what resembled our modern pulpit, or place for expounding the word of God.) The effect of the solemn rehearsal and exposition of the Divine law—accompanied as it was by the power of the Holy Ghost—upon the vast assemblage, was overwhelming. Like those of whom you have been hearing this evening, when Peter preached, 'they were pricked in their heart.' So overpowered were they by a sense of the holiness and spirituality of the law on the one hand, and, consequently, of the depth of their depravity and guilt on the other hand, that numbers of the people wept bitterly. Then it was that Nehemiah interposed; for he saw that this spirit of sadness was not only out of harmony with the occasion, but was fitted to weaken their hands and make their knees wax feeble. He therefore reminded them that mourning was not in keeping with the solemnity; for they were gathered together, not to keep a fast, but a feast unto *the Lord*; not to recall past miseries, but to exult in pre-

sent mercies ; not to brood over their own iniquities, but to magnify the abounding grace of God towards them, and the good hand of God upon them. He addressed them, therefore, in these animating words, 'This day is holy to the Lord your God ; mourn not, nor weep.' Then he said to them, 'Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared ; for this day is holy unto the Lord : neither be ye sorry, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.' His own history supplies a living commentary upon the sentiment. In his cheerfulness under all his trials ; in the serenity with which he confronted the adversaries of God and His people ; in the elastic energy with which he grappled with and surmounted all his difficulties ; and in the spirit of praise which he so continually breathed—in all these we may trace the secret power of his joy in God. This lightened his burdens—beguiled his toils—soothed his woes. It was a hidden fountain—'a well of water springing up into everlasting life.' It was the joy of which Christ spake when He said, 'Your joy no man taketh from you.'

*There is joy—even the joy of the Lord—in the service of God. That joy is the strength of His servants in doing His will.* These are the topics which the words of Nehemiah present ; and on these I purpose to dwell with especial reference to those of you who are busied and harassed amid the occupations and distractions of mercantile life.

There is joy in the service of God. We might have anticipated that such would be the case. Infinitely blessed in Himself, He must delight in blessing. It follows that He must delight in communicating blessedness to all that He creates. The happiness of His creatures—in subordination to His own glory, to which all things are necessarily subservient—must be His design.

If, therefore, the Christian revelation be a revelation from God—a revelation springing out of His mercy—we

should at once infer that it would have for its object the restoration of happiness to those who through disobedience had lost the blessing. What reason would thus lead us to anticipate, revelation abundantly realizes;—the word of God, from first to last, points to the happiness of every one that receives the truth in reality and with power, as its natural scope and crowning result. Need we do more than remind you of the testimony of the Old Testament Scriptures on this subject? They abound in such declarations as these:—‘Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord;’ ‘O Lord of Hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in Thee;’ ‘Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous; and shout for joy all ye that are upright in heart;’ ‘Happy is the people that is in such a case, yea, blessed is that people whose God is the Lord;’ ‘Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance: in Thy name shall they rejoice all the day;’ ‘Delight thyself in the Lord, and He shall give thee the desires of thy heart;’ ‘Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.’ Shall we pass on to the testimony of the New Testament? What is the spirit which it breathes? Christianity was ushered into the world with the proclamation—‘Behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy.’ The Redeemer’s invitation to the burdened and the sad was—‘Come to Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.’ To His disciples He said—‘These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.’ His promise to them when leaving the world was—‘I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.’ The epistles bear the same witness. ‘The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost;’ ‘Rejoice evermore;’ ‘Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice;’ The *peace of God*, which passeth all understanding, shall keep

your hearts and minds, through Christ Jesus ;' 'The fruit of the Spirit is joy ;' 'Whom not having seen, we love ; in whom, though now we see Him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.' Such are the sweet notes of the silver trumpet of salvation. Shall we appeal to the experience of the saints as recorded in Scripture ? 'Your father Abraham,' said Christ, 'desired to see My day, and he saw it, and was glad.' The sweet singer of Israel thus tuned his harp to joy—'The Lord is my shepherd ; I shall not want : He maketh me to lie down in green pastures : He leadeth me beside the still waters : 'Thou hast put gladness into my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.' In like manner the prophet Habakkuk, when he foresaw and foreshadowed the desolations that were coming on Israel, exclaimed—'Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines ; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat ; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls : yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.' Equally rich in examples of the beatific influence of grace are the Scriptures of the New Testament. When the aged Simeon embraced the babe that brought salvation, his whole soul was filled with joy, and he said—'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word ; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.' What were the emotions of St. Paul, 'when it pleased God to reveal his Son Jesus Christ in him ?'—He thus expressed them : 'God forbid that I should glory :—rejoice—exult—'save in the cross of Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world.' What was the invariable effect of 'the word preached,' 'when mixed with faith in them that heard it ?' At first, indeed, they were pricked in their hearts, but afterwards, they were 'those who received the word gladly' that were baptized ; and then we read, 'they

did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart'—so speedily did the fragrant flower of joy spring forth from the root of pain. They sowed in tears;—but, 'in a little moment,' they reaped in joy. 'Beauty was given them for ashes; the oil of joy for mourning; and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.' So it was with the Ethiopian eunuch. Philip joined him on his homeward way, and 'preached to him Jesus:' he believed—confessed his faith—was baptized—and 'went on his way rejoicing.' How striking the case of the Philippian jailer! One moment trembling—affrighted—overwhelmed—asking with intensest anxiety, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?'—the next moment, having 'believed on the Lord Jesus Christ,' and, 'being baptized, he rejoiced with all his house.' Need we add that the epistles all speak of the joy of those to whom the word of salvation came in power? They record of some, that they 'received the word in much tribulation,' yet 'with joy of the Holy Ghost;' of others, that they 'took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they had in heaven a better, that is, an enduring substance.'

Abundant room and reason is there for this heavenly joy. It is 'the joy of *the Lord*.' It is a joy that centres *in* the Lord, and is imparted *by* the Lord. It is a drop from the ocean of the blessedness 'of the blessed God.' It is joy in *Himself*—not in sacraments and signs, not in gifts or graces, not in outward things. These are channels that may convey the living water to the soul; but they have it not in themselves: they are golden pipes that, if not made idols, bring refreshing streams to the thirsty spirit; but they are not the well-spring of those streams. The fathomless fountain is in the Lord Jesus, in whom alone are all the fresh springs of His people. 'Rejoice *in the Lord* always, and again I say, rejoice.' Each saint will say with the blessed virgin, 'My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in *God my Saviour*.' Is there not joy in Him—joy unspeak-

able—for the poor, blind, burdened, weary, condemned, despairing sinner, when he finds in Him the righteousness divine which justifies him freely—the blood divine that cleanses him from all sin—the Almighty Spirit that quickens him to life eternal—the hope that maketh not ashamed—the title ‘to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away?’ Can a man have his sins, which were as scarlet, made white as snow—can he pass from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God—can he be translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God’s dear Son—can he be rescued out of his prison-house, from the bondage of sin into the glorious liberty of the sons of God—can he exchange the husks which the swine do eat for the ‘feast of fat things’ which crowns his Father’s table;—can all this take place, and the man experience no holy joy as the consequence of a revolution compared with which all the changes which enrapture the men of this world are but as the toys of infancy or the sports of childhood? *Their* wells of joy have no depth—they are all surface—they are stirred to the bottom by the slightest breeze. Their gladness is easily dispelled; but the happiness of the believer resembles the ocean, which, even when its face is ruffled, has calm in its soundless depths below. He who minds earthly things has all his treasures embarked in barks of bulrushes—ere long one is wrecked, another swamped, another run down; and by-and-by himself dies—and in that very hour all his thoughts perish. Not so with those who mind heavenly things. Their choicest treasure is stored in the ark of immortality, whose anchor is cast within the vail and abideth sure and steadfast. The vessels which bear their *earthly hopes* may be whelmed in the waters; but that vessel cannot fail to land its freightage on the eternal shore; for Christ pilots it, the Spirit swells its sails, and the Father has pledged His oath that it shall never sink.

‘Your joy,’ said Jesus, ‘no man taketh from you.’ It is

joy in Himself—and He is ‘the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.’ The happiness of the worldling—if happiness it can be called—is transient as ‘the flower of the grass,’ uncertain as a shadow, soiled with the dust, and drawn from ‘broken cisterns.’ The happiness of the saint is sure as the truth of God, permanent as eternity, pure as the crystal river that issues from beneath the throne in heaven, and full as the ocean from which it is derived. ‘These things have I spoken unto you,’ said the Redeemer, ‘that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.’ This joy of the Lord is communicated *by* Him, as well as found *in* Him. It comes not by the will of man; it is not lodged in any ordinances—they often convey, but they never contain it; it is imparted by the Spirit of Jesus, who taketh of the things of Jesus and reveals them to the soul. He prepares the heart for joy by purifying the heart from sin. He prepares it by breaking the heart of stone, that he may then bind up the broken heart with sovereign balms of consolation—pouring in the oil and wine of heaven. He is therefore called the Comforter and ‘the Spirit of Adoption.’ Precious Comforter! There is no wound He cannot mollify, no pain He cannot alleviate, no sorrow He cannot soothe, no despair He cannot irradiate. His consolations and joys are the first-fruits of heaven. Hence it is said, ‘Now He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given to us the earnest of the Spirit.’ ‘The fruit of the Spirit is joy’—and ‘in the presence of God is fulness of joy.’ Grace is glory in the germ. The river of water of life, which rises in heaven, has streams on earth—streams which make glad the city of God below.

There is joy then, beloved, to the servant of God in the service of his Father in heaven, and the joy which he feels is ‘the joy of the Lord.’ Thirst for it. Drink of it abundantly. ‘Draw water with joy out of the wells of salvation.’ Fear not the living draught. It cannot intoxicate; it never

palls. Whilst it refreshes it invigorates ; whilst it animates it sustains. For 'the joy of the Lord is your strength.'

It is your strength for active duty. It is the oil on the wheels of exertion, which makes them run freely and smoothly. It is not the sickly, dreamy, selfish emotion of the quietist or the recluse—the hothouse flower that shrinks from the open air, and needs perpetual forcing. The joy of the Lord nerves for toil, and braces for conflict ; makes the yoke of Christ easy, and His burden light. What a man does happily, he will do heartily ; and what he does heartily, he will do well. 'I will run the way of thy commandments,' said David, 'when thou shalt enlarge my heart.' So, in withstanding the allurements or the onsets of the world ; in maintaining the good fight of faith ; in finishing the course assigned us to fulfil ; in keeping the faith once delivered to the saints, even unto death ;—there is nothing which so nourishes the inner man, so fortifies the spirit, so imparts elasticity to the step, vigour to the arm, and nerve to the heart, as 'joy in the Holy Ghost.' It makes the *devoted* Christian—by making the *satisfied* Christian. The husks which the swine eat may excite the hankering of him that is in want ; but he who feasts at his Father's table turns from them with loathing. To delight in God is the way to delight in His service. The slave who dreads, and therefore hates, his master ; or the hireling, who works only for wages—performs his irksome task with distaste and with weariness. But the dutiful and affectionate son, who labours without wish for recompense save his father's smile of sweet approval—he pursues his work with relish, because he pursues it with joy. Love makes the labour sweet, because it makes the labourer happy. Thus the Christian serves God because he finds His service perfect freedom—he finds that 'the work of righteousness is peace ;'—he turns to the divine will through the power of attraction, as the needle turns to the pole, or the sunflower to the sun ; for his sun and his pole



are Christ Jesus his Lord, from whom springs all his light of gladness. On the other hand, he who finds no fruition in his religion is almost sure to be weak and wavering in his choice. Finding, or rather seeming to find, that the cup of salvation does not satisfy his soul, he will be tempted to raise to his lip the impure cup of earthly pleasure. Hence it is that many of the young, who did run well, are drawn aside to folly. They failed to taste the bread from heaven—the angels' food, else they would not have hankered after the garlic and the cucumbers of earth.

'The joy of the Lord' strengthens faith as well as obedience. If faith do not ripen into joy, it leaves the professor open to the suggestions of unbelief, to the insidious insinuations of Satan—that God is a hard master, that His service is gloomy, and that His commandments are grievous. But let the servant of God find 'peace and joy in believing,' and his belief, so sealed, will be established; he will know that in embracing the gospel he has 'not believed a cunningly devised fable,' for he will have a witness in himself that it is indeed 'glad tidings of great joy.' So it will come to pass that he will be confident, and courageous in his confidence, and shielded from 'the fiery darts of the wicked.' Be happy in your faith, and you will be steadfast in your faith; but let restlessness and discontent harass you, and they will fill you with questionings and misgivings. In like manner, holy joy will be the strength of the believer's patience amid all his sorrows, and of his serenity amidst all the vexations, distractions, and uneasiness of life's daily task. You who are occupied from early to late, and from Sabbath to Sabbath, in the vortex of mercantile affairs—you know how much you meet with to fret your spirit and chafe your temper. You often feel faint and jaded and oppressed. Not a few of our traffickers are worn out prematurely by the high pressure of modern business. The overtaxed brain and overstrung *nerves give way*. Yet it is not so much the effort, as it is

the anxiety, the application, or the excitement of their occupations which works the mischief. And what then will abate this fatal pressure? What will save the machinery from derangement and dislocation?—what, but the joy of the Lord? That will keep a man tranquil in the midst of commotion—cheerful in the midst of disappointment—self-possessed in the midst of dangers—steadfast when all around are driven to and fro, and tossed up and down, like the leaves of ‘the trees when shaken by the wind.’ This well-spring within will also refresh the spirit in the dreariest hours; yea, give to the mourner songs in the night season. There is no more beautiful sight in this vale of tears than a child of God rising sublimely above all that the world can threaten or inflict—enjoying most of heaven when he has least of earth. As a holy sufferer once said, whilst writhing in an agony—‘I never had such anguish, but I never had such joy.’ Or as one of the martyrs, when burning at the stake, exclaimed—‘You ask for a miracle, behold one! these flames are to me as a bed of roses.’ Was this illusion?—then what is real? Was this enthusiasm?—then what is sound and sober? A fiction, a sentiment, an emotion, could never have upheld ‘the glorious army of martyrs,’ never have enabled them to wake the echoes of the dungeon with psalms of thanksgiving, and mount triumphant in their chariot of fire to their Father’s arms. Their spiritual joy so absorbed the inner man that the tortures of the outer man were scarcely felt. Such is the power of this heavenly grace. It imparts a strength which no burden can crush, no weariness exhaust, no disasters overwhelm.

Beloved, why should any be miserable when in Christ there is full provision made for the happiness of every child of Adam? ‘Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.’ ‘And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come; and let

him that heareth say, Come ; and let him that is athirst, come ; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.' 'And whosoever drinketh,' saith Christ, 'of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst ; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life.' Poor, weary, wandering child of earth !—whose heart is panting after satisfaction other than earth can supply—who sayest in thy secret heart, 'Oh that I knew where I might find rest ; that I could discover the portion of my soul !'—I tell thee, as they told the son of Timeus of old, 'Be of good comfort, rise ; He calleth thee.' Jesus, the friend of sinners, calls thee ; that yearning of thy spirit is from Him ;—He waits to bless thee. Cast away the garment of self-righteousness. Lay aside every weight that would retard thee, and hasten to the Saviour. Fall at His feet in faith—yield thyself into His hands ;—and He will speak peace to thy mind—He will send thee on thy way rejoicing. Hearken to His expostulation and assurance—'Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread ; and your labour for that which satisfieth not ? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.'

How sad it is that so many who name the name of Christ drag on a morose, repining, wearisome life ; and thus bring up an evil report of the promised land ? They show no beautiful clusters of the vine of heaven, and, consequently, men of the world, taking advantage of such caricatures of Christian life, are ready to say—'These men are less happy than ourselves ; they are more full of complainings, more cankered with cares, more troubled about many things. We are told that the gospel is glad tidings of great joy ; but are these the evidences ?'—It is not in this way that Christianity can be commended. You must covet the joy of the Lord, in order that 'your light may so shine before men,' *that, seeing your blessedness, as well as your holiness,*

'they may glorify your Father which is in heaven.' Let commercial men, immersed in public avocations, study, amid the hurry, vexation, tumult, and toil, of the world, to maintain a genial spirit, a heavenly sunshine of the soul—irradiating and tinging all their course—making it evident that they have a hidden light which earth never kindled, and which earth cannot quench. There have been many bright examples of such a career. Who that knew the generous Thornton—who that came into contact with the manly Buxton—who that communed with the genial Wilberforce, but saw in them that they had a joy which no man could take from them? And ought not the believer to be joyful? What!—if his sins are forgiven and he is reconciled to God in Christ; what!—if Jesus is his friend, his shepherd, his brother; what!—if the Holy Ghost is his comforter and his guide; what!—if angels are his attendants and all holy beings his brethren; what!—if God is his portion—heaven his eternal home; what!—if all things are his, whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas or the world, or life or death, or things present or things to come, all are his, and he is Christ's, and Christ is God's—ought we not to 'rejoice evermore'—to rejoice with a joy unspeakable, and full of glory? Be not therefore afraid of holy joy, as though it were presumptuous. If it tend to holiness, it cannot be from evil. Grieve not the Holy Ghost by mistrusting His gift. Neither think of it as a distant attainment which you are not yet privileged to possess—or that is reserved for the hoary saint only—if not for the heavenly state alone. Regard it as enjoined upon the very babe in Christ: for is it not written, 'Let the heart of them rejoice that *seek* the Lord?' You may stagger at appropriating a promise—but can you stagger at obeying a precept?—But 'Rejoice in the Lord always,' is as much a precept as 'Thou shalt not steal,' or 'Thou shalt not commit adultery.' And do you not need the blessed cordial to strengthen you for life's toil and struggle?

Do you not need it to bear you up against the world's disappointments and disheartenments—to secure you from the world's seductions, and arm you against the world's assaults—to inspirit you in the evil day, and calm you in the stormy hour? Follow after it then—for it is commanded; accept it—for it is promised. Anticipate your home—where ‘in His presence is fulness of joy; and where at His right hand there are pleasures for evermore.’ Let the *sun of heaven* be the *morning star of earth*.

## LECTURE X.

### NEHEMIAH'S UNWORLDLINESS OF MIND.

'Yea, also I continued in the work of this wall, neither bought we any land; and all my servants were gathered thither unto the work.'  
NEH. v. 16.

It was the peculiar and predicted character of Israel, that they should 'dwell alone, and not be numbered among the nations.' Such was their condition in Egypt; such it remained whilst they dwelt in the land of promise; such has it continued to be since they were scattered abroad, as chaff, to the four winds of heaven. However dispersed, they are still distinct; a Jew is everywhere a Jew; his nationality has not been lost in his dispersion; the peculiar people are like oil cast on the waves of the sea—everywhere diffused, yet nowhere blended. In this respect, as in other things, Israel after the flesh were an expressive type of Israel after the Spirit. Not more truly were the former nationally separate from the nations of the uncircumcised, than are the latter spiritually separated from a world that lieth in wickedness. They are so, however scattered, however interspersed amongst the ungodly, however they must have their habitations and their occupations in the midst of the men of this world, 'who have their portion in this world.' Still they are a 'peculiar' people, as designated in the second lesson for this evening's service. The word in the Greek signifies an 'appropriated,' a 'purchased' people; and they

are so styled because they are redeemed by the blood and set apart by the Spirit of Jesus from 'the present evil world.'

Nehemiah, a beautiful model in other points of view for the man of God who is busied in the world, is especially an example for him in this feature of his character. We find that, whether in the voluptuous court of Persia, encompassed with the fascinations of pleasure; or whether at Jerusalem, in the midst of harassing difficulties and besetments; or whether as Governor of Israel, surrounded by the seductions of power and position, he still demeaned himself as a citizen of heaven. Hence it came to pass, that whilst many of the nobles and great men at Jerusalem were chiefly intent on aggrandizing themselves—taking advantage of their poorer brethren, and adding field to field, and house to house—he did not so much as entangle himself with any purchase of property, but devoted himself wholly to the work which God had assigned him. Not in the spirit of vain-glorying, but in the integrity of his heart, he testified of himself—'I continued in the work of this wall, neither bought we any land: and all my servants were gathered thither unto the work.' So clean were his hands, so disinterested was his heart, that he sought no earthly return for his services; 'his witness was on high, and his record in heaven;' 'he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.' Yea, and whilst he forewent the usual revenues of the Governor, he maintained a large and generous hospitality; entertaining at his table, with a princely munificence, numbers of strangers as well as of the resident Jews. 'Moreover,' he said, 'there were at my table an hundred and fifty of the Jews and rulers, beside those that came into us from among the heathen that are about us. Now that which was prepared for me daily was one ox and six choice sheep; also fowls were prepared for me, and once in ten days store of all sorts of wine: yet for all this required not I the bread of the

Governor, because the bondage was heavy upon this people.' Thus he not only forbore to exact what he might have fairly demanded of the people, but he at the same time made his dwelling the abode of hospitality and kindness.

Our subject for this evening is, therefore, the unworldly spirit which ought to distinguish the servant of God amidst the occupations and relationships of this house of his pilgrimage. The Lord God vouchsafe to us His good Spirit, to enable us so to hear and obey His word, that we may have our treasure, our heart, and 'our conversation in heaven.'

It can hardly be denied, that those whom Christ calls—are called out of the world—called to be of another spirit than that which actuated them when they were of as well as in the world. It is specified as the grand purpose of Christ's suffering, that 'He died for our sins to redeem us from this present evil world, according to the will of God.' Can we then be partakers of His redemption, unless we are rescued from the world? To the same effect, is the language of God, addressed to all His people, 'Come ye out from among them, and be separate, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and be a father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.' In like manner the Spirit spake by St. Paul, 'Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.' No language could be more expressive. It is abundantly clear then, that there must be an essential difference between the world at large, and the chosen children of God. It is clear that the latter will be discriminated from the former, however they may be intermingled in their society. But wherein does the distinction consist? Does it consist in withdrawing from the occupations of life—in shrinking into the hermitage, or skulking into the monastery? Far from it. Our Master, when interceding for His disciples, said, 'I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world,



but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil'—the evil in the world. We are enjoined to be, 'not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.' Are we not bound then, according to the beautiful language of our Catechism, 'to learn and labour truly to do our duty, and get our own living in the state of life to which it has pleased God to call us?' It is quite possible for a man to come out of the world physically, and yet not to come out of it spiritually—it is quite possible for a man to retreat into the convent, and yet to carry the world with him in his heart : on the other hand, it is quite possible for a man to live in the midst of the busiest occupation, and yet to be crucified unto the world, and the world unto him. It is, therefore, in the spirit, rather than in the letter, that we are to be separated from the world. And this separation is to be as real in these times, as it was in primitive times ; in these lands, as it must be in pagan countries.

There is a baptized world as well as an unbaptized. All are not Israel that are called Israel. All are not Christ's that are called Christian. A soldier of the cross must fight manfully against the world here, even as he would have to do were he in the heart of heathen lands ; yea, it is much harder to maintain the conflict in the former case, than it would be in the latter. An ambushed enemy is more dangerous than an open foe.

But what is the spring of an unworldly spirit?—Faith, the mighty power of faith. 'This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?' The believer knows in himself that he has in heaven a better, that is, an enduring substance. His native country is on high. He looks upon the present world as no more than 'the house of his pilgrimage ;' consequently he reckons that he ought to occupy himself in it, and feel towards it, and hope from it, simply as a sojourner, who 'looks for a city that hath foundations, whose maker and

builder is God.' Of such an one it may well be said, that his 'citizenship' is in heaven—as the Greek word used by St. Paul, which we render 'our *conversation* is in heaven,' might be more literally rendered. And there was a peculiar force in the expression as employed by one who was himself a Roman citizen—as he once pleaded in arrest of an injustice that was about to be inflicted upon him—for Rome, being the mighty mistress of the then known world, gave such peculiar immunities and privileges to her citizens, that a Roman retained his rights wherever he might have his dwelling; and whether he abode in Gaul, or in Britain, or in the extremities of the earth, still, wherever the Roman sceptre stretched its sway, there he might claim and avail himself of his illustrious prerogative; he belonged not the less to the great metropolis—challenged its protection, and gloried in its name.

All this aptly represents the state of those who are citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem. They enjoy their citizenship not only when enclosed within its crystal walls, but wherever they may be scattered abroad in the midst of this naughty world; in the body, or out of the body, they are free of the celestial city; their honours, their home, their treasure, and their heart are there. Consequently, they pass through this world as the scene of their pilgrimage—'as a strange country'—as a place of tabernacled. Like Israel in the wilderness, they 'are journeying to the land of which the Lord hath said, I will give it you.' Their mother country is above.

This is the essence of an unworldly mind. Actuated by this spirit, a Christian tradesman will not be enslaved by business, but will keep it in subjection to his soul's good. The unearthliness of his heart will be manifest not only in the closet, the sanctuary, and the congregation of the faithful, but will exert its indirect influence on the most secular and distracting of his avocations and pursuits. In the counting-house—in the warehouse—in the exchange—he will still

be a spiritual man. His unworldliness will show itself not in a forced or formal demeanour, not in affectation of dress, or look, or speech ; but in moderation of desire, in crucifixion to the world, in meekness of spirit, in deadness to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. He must ' walk in the flesh, but he will not war after the flesh.' He lives amidst, but he does not live according to, the things of sense. ' They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh ; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.' True, instead of being less punctual, he will be more punctual, than others in his engagements—instead of being less, he will be more assiduous in his avocations, but all with a sobriety, a subduedness of spirit, which will broadly distinguish him from the grovelling, idolatrous world around him. It is thus the people of God maintain a certain unearthly peculiarity throughout all their relationships to earth ; they do not become assimilated to the crowd through which they hold the tenor of their way. Like that limpid stream of which we are told, that, entering a salt and bituminous lake, it clears its way through the uncongenial waters, untainted and uncommingled, so that it issues forth below as pure as when it entered. So the current of God's people, passing through the dead sea of this evil world, does not blend with its waters, but speeds on undefiled to the clear ocean in heaven. On this wise it is that we must be diligent in earth's duties, yet apart from earth's spirit ; bodily in its midst, yet mentally and morally—separate.

Suffer me now to point out in some particulars how this spirit will tell upon your everyday course as mercantile men struggling with the difficulties and busied in the concerns of the world. It will act upon you so as to restrain you from intimacy, though you cannot avoid intercourse, with the ungodly. You cannot altogether escape from companying ' with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with drunkards, for then must ye needs go

out of the world ;' but you will disrelish their society, and recoil from their tone of sentiment—to mix with them will be a cross to you—to escape from them a relief. You will feel it a mortification to be obliged to consort with a vain, sensual, faithless generation : it will be like breathing an oppressive atmosphere, till you can again return to the sanctuary, the closet, or the family circle, where you breathe a congenial element, and feel your soul at home. In like manner, you will be distinguished from the world by the moderation with which you will form your plans and prosecute your undertakings. Earnestness and industry are perfectly compatible with soberness of mind. 'Let your moderation be known of all men ; the Lord is at hand.' You will not have your soul absorbed in your speculations as they have whose all is embarked on an earthly raft ; for your treasure, your hope, and your heritage, are beyond the reach of peril and vicissitude. It will be seen that you have something in view far surpassing all that occupies you here ; and that you engage in secular avocations out of a sense of duty towards God, rather than from choice, or interest, or affection. What those around you treat as matters of overwhelming importance, you will regard as little better than showy impertinences which have more of semblance than reality, and with which you would gladly have done, were it not that you owe it to God, and to your generation, that you should undergo the toil, the struggle, the discipline, the weariness of life's appointed task. You will also show 'another spirit' in the friendships which you form, and the associations which you choose. It is one thing to be forced to come into contact with 'the children of this world' in the way of duty, and another to conform to them in their customs and consort with them in their amusements from choice. Kind to all, you will be intimate with few, and select none for your friend who is not a friend of Christ. Copy Daniel—the man greatly beloved—copy him in the Persian court. Sur-

rounded by the corruptions of a palace, 'he defiled not himself with the king's meat,' he kept himself unspotted from the world. Imitate Joseph, who, whether in the house of Potiphar or in the palace of Pharaoh, fulfilled the duties of his office, yet feared to 'sin against God.' And the God whom he served was to him as 'a wall of fire,' and as 'a little sanctuary in the midst of the heathen.' You are safe whilst you are separate. You run little risk whilst you go no further than you can avoid ; but when once you unnecessarily, through heedlessness, or eagerness for gain, enter into close relations with ungodly men, be sure that you are taking a step pregnant with danger, not to say disaster. So it proved in the case of Lot when he chose the plain of Sodom, regardless of the wickedness of its inhabitants, because it was well watered and fruitful as the garden of the Lord,—his lust of earthly gain and sensual enjoyment plunged him into vexation, and peril, and loss, and desolation, and a terrible snare. So, again, it proved with Jehoshaphat when he ventured upon unhallowed alliances with the wicked. In the first instance, he joined his forces with those of Ahab to go up with him to battle against Ramoth-Gilead : but the unblest expedition came to nought ; the king of Judah had to flee for his life, and the prophet of God thus sternly rebuked him, 'Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord.' Yet, forgetting past warning and correction, he subsequently joined himself 'with Ahaziah, king of Israel, who did very wickedly : he joined himself with him to make ships to go to Tarshish ;' but God confounded the unprincipled coalition, for the ships were broken at Ezion-geber, 'so that they were not able to go to Tarshish.'

These things were written as beacons to warn Christian men that they should not form intimate connexions in business with godless men ; for such alliances cannot come to good. They will prove sources of sorrow, if they do not

of sin ; and happy will it be for the Christian who has been so ensnared, if the Lord rend asunder the unequal yoke, and the loss of property avert the loss of peace, and consistency, and 'good report.' Guard then, beloved—guard against unnecessary entanglements with the worldly. More especially let the young beware of connecting themselves with those who do not fear God in that connexion which is at once the closest and the most influential in life :—'Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.' He or she who marries, but not in the Lord, will assuredly smart for the step ; God will infallibly make that individual see that it was an evil and bitter thing not to have consulted the Lord in a matter of such surpassing moment.

Need I add, that an unworldly mind will restrain you from that greediness of gain, which more than ever characterises the world, in the present age ? Remember how Scripture brands avarice, and the slave of avarice. It denounces the covetous man as 'an idolater ;' it speaks of him as one 'whom God abhorreth ;' and it affirms that 'covetousness is idolatry.' Stronger still, if possible, is its language when it asserts that the 'love of money is the root of all evil ;' implying that there is scarcely a crime which does not originate in, or is not aggravated by, that accursed disposition. Yet—how it binds men with its spell ! How, at the present moment, is it driving headlong the mercantile world ! It is but faithfulness in the minister of Christ to testify that the system of business as now carried on in this country is, to a large extent, unchristian and pernicious. Such is the high pressure of traffic, that it is hard for those engaged in it to retain unimpaired either their bodily powers or their mental faculties ; much more is it hard for them to retain the calmness, cheerfulness, spirituality, and self-control which befit the citizen of heaven, whose heart and treasure are not here. In consequence it needs an uncommon measure of grace and watchfulness in order that you may not

be swept along by the torrent of the age—in order that you may be of another spirit than that which surrounds you—mastering the world, instead of being mastered by it; ruling circumstances instead of being their victim and their sport. To be the former, is to be a man—an immortal—a saint—a king; to be the latter, is to be a slave—a shadow—a dupe—who will awake at last to find that he has ‘sown the wind, and reaped the whirlwind’—‘sown to the flesh, and must of the flesh reap’ everlasting ‘corruption.’

Beware, therefore, lest you be borne along by the spring-tide of covetousness which surges around you; take care that you always keep the prow of your barque towards the haven above. ‘Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.’ Let the thrilling appeal of Christ perpetually echo in your heart—‘What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?’ Yet a little while, and a costlier coffin, more sumptuous funeral trappings, and a more garnished tomb, than others have, will be all that untold wealth can avail him who has sold the birthright of his immortality for handfuls of shining dust.

It remains to be added, that if you be of an unworldly spirit you will have a large and open hand for the claims of God, the service of His Church, the furtherance of His truth, and for the relief of the poor and needy, ‘especially of them who are of the household of faith.’ How sad the tendency of wealth to contract the heart of him who gains it! Melancholy, but not uncommon, the spectacle of a man whose liberality has diminished in proportion as his resources have expanded; who gave largely when he was comparatively poor, and gives grudgingly now that he has waxen rich. The love of accumulation steals into the breast like a serpent—poisoning the fountains of kindness. Wealth ministers to selfishness—and selfishness has nothing to *spare*. Be very jealous of the first emotions of covetousness.

‘If riches increase, set not your hearts upon them.’ Beware of a craving after constant accessions to your property—the passion for adding field to field and house to house, for having splendid dwellings, and sumptuous equipages, and vast estates, that you may call the lands by your own names, and transmit them to your descendants. Leave such ambition to the world—they have no other portion—they seek no higher reward. But ye are not of the world. You profess to have a kingdom and a treasure ‘in the land that is very far off.’ Thither, therefore, export your riches. ‘Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness.’ Leave it to the heirs of earth to ‘walk in a vain shadow, and disquiet themselves in vain; to heap up riches, whilst they cannot tell who shall gather them.’ ‘This, their way, is their folly, and their posterity laud their doings.’ But so should it not be with you. If God gives largely to you—give you largely to God; secure your gains—by parting with them; make them truly your own—by laying them at your Saviour’s feet. Is it for you to wish to have it said when you shall have gone to your account, that you died worth so many thousands of pounds? Worth?—if that be all your worth, you are worthless indeed. Is it for you to be bent upon bequeathing to your children superfluous wealth—fortunes which are fitted to encumber their souls, and interpose between them and heaven? No, brethren, ‘seek first’ for your children, even as for yourselves, ‘the kingdom of God and His righteousness.’ Bequeath to them the fragrant memories of your good deeds; leave them a rich heritage in the prayers and benedictions of the fatherless and widows. Many parents, who ought to have done better, have drowned their children’s souls in affluence and luxury. Will those children thank them when they meet face to face before the judgment-seat? I do not say—enjoy not in moderation what God has given you; for we are told that ‘God hath given us all things richly to enjoy.’ I do not say



—Forego the table of hospitality, or furnish it meagrely. Imitate Nehemiah in this respect, as in other respects. Neither do I say—Make no provision for your offspring. We are taught that the fathers ought to lay up for their children. Yet take heed that you do not, in the name of your children, rob your God, lest, haply, you entail upon them a curse instead of a blessing. In this very city, how many profligate sons have I known of who soon squandered in riotous living all the substance for which their fathers had toiled—making shipwreck alike of time and eternity! Happy had it been both for parents and children had more been dedicated to God, and less heaped up, to prove a mockery and a snare!

Brethren, let me enamour you of this unworldly spirit. How beautiful it is! How it adorns the doctrine of God our Saviour! How it bears a living witness to Christ! How it ever preaches a sermon intelligible to all—one, in its silent eloquence, most persuasive—captivating others into an *unearthly* conversation. Yes, if you would let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven—if you would have them take knowledge of you that you have been with Jesus, it must not be by pretence, or affectation, or formalism, but by the ethereal spirit which you breathe, by the exalted tenor of your life, by making it manifest, that you have a secret power which the world knows not; that you pursue business as the worldly do not pursue it; that you endure losses as they do not endure them; and, above all, that you bear prosperity as they cannot bear it. If the more you have of earth, the less earthly you become—if riches humble, instead of exalting you, expand, instead of contracting your heart—the most worldly will admit that this is the power of God. We speak of adversity as a touchstone, and so it is—but prosperity is a much more searching test. It is *related* of one of the hearers of the excellent Richard Cecil,

that he sent to his minister a slip of paper requesting the prayers of the church for one who had come into sudden fortune—that the event might not endanger his soul. That individual knew something of his own heart, and realized the force of the startling saying—‘How hardly shall a rich man enter into the kingdom of heaven.’ In the same spirit of wisdom, our own incomparable Litany teaches us to pray, not only ‘in all time of our tribulation,’ but ‘in all time of wealth, good Lord, deliver us.’ Yet few there are who pray to God to keep them when they are prosperous, whilst in adversity multitudes will pray to be delivered out of their affliction. In very deed however, you have more need to pray to God that He would hold you up when the tide of the world is in your favour, than when the waves and blasts of trouble beat upon you.

Let the young set out in life, resolved through strength divine to cultivate a heavenly mind. I know that many of our young men have to ply their daily task in warehouses, counting-houses, and manufactories, where they breathe an atmosphere impregnated with secularity; where the world, the world’s gain, success in business, cleverness in bargaining, are everything. How hard for such, susceptible as they are of the plastic power of circumstances, and easily seduced by surrounding example—how hard for them to keep the mind in communion with God; and whilst compassed with earthly influences not to inhale them, but through the golden tube of prayer, to draw down the air of heaven amidst that tainted atmosphere, which would otherwise soon quench the living lamp of godliness within the soul!

My young friends, dare to be singular—not in affectation, but in righteousness. Be assured that if only you are consistent, the world will respect, even whilst it reproaches you; and your employers, though they may not be able to appreciate your motives, will ultimately confide in your character; yea, and those who at first made you the butt of

their ridicule, will by-and-by say within themselves, 'May our souls be with theirs when we have to give our account to our Judge.'

Think not that to cast out the spirit of the world is to create a void within; to crush your energies and dry up your sympathies; far from it. Christ does not simply dislodge, He displaces the world. If he expel the love of it from our hearts, it is by substituting the love of Himself; if He wean us from glittering clay, it is by holding forth to us 'an enduring substance;' if He draw our affections from this land of shadows and changes and decoys, it is by the mighty attraction of 'a kingdom that cannot be moved.' Be ready then to give up all *for* Christ, and you will find all *in* Christ. Eat abundantly of the children's bread, and you will disrelish the husks of earth. Look much at the bright battlements of 'the city of habitation,' and all here will look faded and dim.

God Almighty give you grace to use this world as not abusing it; to improve it as the scene of duty, but not to love it as a place of rest! It is at best a verdant quagmire—build upon it, and you will be engulfed; tread lightly over it, and you will escape its pollution!

## LECTURE XI.

### NEHEMIAH'S JEALOUSY FOR THE HONOUR OF GOD.

‘Ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the heathen our enemies?’—NEH. v. 9:

THERE was much good sense and Christian wisdom in the reply which was once given to a dignitary of our Church by a simple rural pastor. The latter had said to the former whilst remonstrating with him on account of some unwise step that he was about to take, ‘If you act so what will the people say?’ To which the other replied with disdain, ‘Do you care what the people say?’ The rejoinder of the plain man was, ‘I care as little as any man what the people say; but I care a great deal what the people have a *right* to say.’ How just the distinction! Human opinion ought to have no weight with us when it contravenes duty; but it ought to weigh much with us when we incur its censure by the violation of duty. It does not speak well for a man that he is regardless, though it would have been no less wrong if he had made an idol, of his reputation. Our own name ought to be of little estimation in our mind except as it may affect the name of our Master. If He be wounded through us, then indeed we ought to feel the smart; if we bring reproach on that holy name by which we are called, then indeed we ought to be confounded. It is always of the nature of love and loyalty to be sensitive in relation to

the fame of their object. The British soldier who is true to his country, his queen, and his captain, cannot be more keenly stung than by hearing them reviled—the more so if in any wise his own conduct has occasioned the reproach. And is the soldier of the cross to be less alive to the honour of the Captain of his salvation who redeemed him with His blood? Is he to feel less pierced when Jesus is wounded in the house of His friends?

The noble man—ennobled through the grace of God—whose character we are illustrating for your edification, was not wanting in this distinctive feature of the host of God's elect. He was not only valiant in fighting the good fight of faith—braving every foe, and weathering every hardship, in the service of his God—but he was tremblingly alive to any dishonour brought upon Him whom he served; and above all when brought upon Him by those who bore His name, and were identified with His truth. When therefore, with just indignation, he reprehended the usurious and oppressive conduct of the richer Jews towards their poorer brethren, he not only appealed to their sense of justice, but he still more cuttingly appealed to them on the ground of the disrepute into which they brought the holy name of the God of Israel, giving occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. "Ought ye not," he exclaimed, "to walk in the fear of God because of the reproach of the heathen our enemies?" Jealousy therefore for the honour of God in the midst of a wicked world, is the subject for our instruction this evening—that jealousy burning in the heart and manifesting itself in the conversation of those who are not only called upon to witness for God in the household, the social circle, the secluded walk, but who are bound to uphold His cause and vindicate His truth in the mart, the thoroughfare, the thronged assembly. May His Spirit be with us while we wait upon His word!

God has a people in the world. He has never failed to

have a little flock—a ransomed, reconciled, renovated few—who, in the language of the second lesson for this evening's service, have been 'called to be saints,' chosen out of, set apart from, an evil world. Of these it is that God says, 'This people have I formed for myself,' and immediately adds, 'They shall show forth my praise.' They stand therefore in a peculiar relationship towards the rest of mankind; they are the candlesticks of God's truth—the temples of His spirit—the models of His workmanship. They are set as confessors in the midst of gainsayers; as lilies in the midst of thorns. In them God is pleased to enshrine His light, and concentrate His grace; so that it is through them, and by them, He brings His light and grace to bear upon the dark and corrupted world in which they dwell. Hence Christ said to the little group which He has gathered to Himself, 'Ye are the light of the world: ye are the salt of the earth.' Through them the lamp of life is to cast its bright beams on the darkness that encompasses them; from them the savour of the Divine influence is to transfuse itself into the mass of corruption by which they are surrounded. The ungodly will judge chiefly of Christianity by those who profess it, and be largely won, or scandalized by the manner in which it is adorned, or disgraced by such. As God said of old to His Church, so He says still, 'Ye are my witnesses.' How sublime, how dignified, how responsible a position—to be the visible witnesses of the invisible God—the selected vessels of clay to convey to mankind the unsearchable riches of Christ! Such, and so exalted, is the destiny of God's people in relation to His grace and truth in their bearing upon the world. What then follows? Surely that it is their paramount and imperative duty to see that God's grace be glorified, His truth exemplified, His honour vindicated, His kingdom maintained by them. Their watchword should be, 'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.'

What is to be dearest to them?—Their wealth—their success—their distinction—their standing amongst men—their family—their life itself? No! these are to be to them but as dross in comparison with His name whom they serve. That must be their pole-star. Reputation, ease, relations, life, must be sacrificed rather than Christ denied, God dishonoured, truth betrayed, and occasion given to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme.

But if this be the spirit of the faithful—and it must be if they love their Master—then they cannot but be exceedingly sensitive to reproach cast upon His holy name. No evidence will more unequivocally show their loyalty to their Lord than this godly jealousy. Would you give much for the affection of a friend who in your absence heard you traduced and misrepresented, yet cared not to espouse your cause? Would you set much value on the devotedness of a child who could sit by whilst the reputation of his father was assailed, and yet bear to be silent in its defence? Is it not one of the surest signs of the fidelity of love that it is wounded when the object on which it is placed is wounded; yea, that the wound is felt more keenly by him that loves than if it had been inflicted on himself? How touchingly beautiful is this delicate, disinterested sensibility of love! It will make the timid bold, the stammering eloquent. See it in the mother, vindicating her child—see it in the patriot, vindicating his country; but see it most sublimely and thrillingly manifested in the martyr, pleading for his Lord. What though the cold, carnal world cannot appreciate the spectacle; angels hover round it with admiring sympathy, and the King of angels stands up to watch the mighty working of His own strength—‘made perfect in weakness!’ There is an affected philosophy in the language of the world on this subject. ‘How,’ it is asked, ‘can the Infinite be honoured or dishonoured by an insignificant creature of clay? *Can man* reflect the slightest light, or breathe the slightest

stain, on majesty divine?' Absolutely he cannot, but relatively he may. The portrait cannot affect the original intrinsically, yet it may represent or misrepresent the object which it portrays; consequently, such abstract subtlety does not in the least lessen the obligation to glorify God, or extenuate the guilt of such as blaspheme God, or of such as can bear with cool indifference to hear the blasphemy. Nor must we forget that whatever the guilt of the godless who blaspheme, their guilt is surpassed by the guilt of those who, whilst professing to know and love the Lord, can make light of the blasphemy and try to gloss it over—arguing that neither the goodness nor the wickedness of worms of the dust can have any influence on Him that inhabiteth eternity. So to apologise for profaneness is to participate in its guilt.

But if loyalty to God will make us keenly alive to any thing which touches His honour on the part of others, much more will it make us shrinkingly sensitive to any thing in ourselves which might give occasion to the enemy to revile. Unless this be the rule of our moral sensibility, we have reason to suspect that our profession of zeal is hypocritical. Were it sincere, we should dread most the scandals for which we are most responsible. However the beam in our brother's eye might disgust us, the mote in our own eye would distress us more. We would say,—‘Let the godless and profane speak all manner of evil against us falsely, and for Christ's name sake; but let not the contumely cast upon us recoil upon our Lord.’ ‘Outrage me as you will,’ the genuine soldier of the cross will say, ‘but do not insult the Captain of my salvation. My reputation is of little worth—only let not my Master be blasphemed.’ It is thus we must strive to shield the name we bear. It is thus we must seek, above all things, to give no cause to the adversary to rail, or to the weak to stumble. Let the enemies of the truth be able to find no fault in us, except it be concerning the law



of our God. Like Daniel, let us brave the lions' den, rather than betray our Master's honour.

Men of business! amid the affairs of your ordinary life, give no occasion of reproach—neither in the counting-house, nor in the exchange, nor in the manufactory, nor behind the counter—to those who lie in wait for your halting. They will judge of your profession in the sanctuary by your practice in the market-place; they will measure your evangelical principles by the integrity of your secular conduct, and by the spirit which you breathe when mingling with the world. They are keenly alive to deviations from what becometh the gospel of Christ, much as they slight its authority and deny its power: exorbitant in their expectations from the righteous, whilst they suspect the reality of their faith. Transgression directly against God, indeed, they will smile at, and easily forgive; but transgression against man they bitterly resent. Their standard of guilt is in an inverse ratio to that of 'the first and great commandment.' Against this inversion you must boldly protest, maintaining, according to the order of Scripture, that 'to render to God the things that are God's' is our paramount duty; whilst to render to man the things that are man's 'is like unto it.' Yet at the same time you must take special heed not to give the world occasion to say, 'These saints are as hard in their dealings, as ready to take advantage of the unwary, as keen in their bargaining, as prone to commit ingenious frauds, if only they can do it without compromising their character, as those who neither profess to know nor to serve the Lord. The honour and honesty of sceptical men are brighter than theirs.' Woe to those who provoke such imputations. 'It must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh.'

Let it not be inferred, however, that we would have you become the dupes of dishonesty, or that we would discountenance your watching for, and taking advantage of openings

for commercial enterprise, favourable changes in the market, opportunities for sober speculation. Far from it : rather should you strive to excel your fellows—for the truth's sake—as in virtue, so in skill. It was strikingly said by John Newton, that a Christian ought, in proportion to his talents, to surpass all other men in his own calling ; because, serving a heavenly Master, and actuated by loftier motives, and consequently following his vocation with greater cheerfulness, alacrity, and efficiency—if he were only a shoe-black, he ought to polish shoes better than a godless servant. How just the sentiment ! Sound religion qualifies, instead of unfitting us, for the performance of our allotted task. Let, therefore, the disciple of Christ be earnest in the prosecution of his occupation ; let him be active, punctual, sagacious, and, if it please God, successful in business ; but let him take heed that he does all this without imbibing that selfish, grasping spirit which will impel him to overlook the interests of others in his own, and to purchase success even by the sacrifice of principle. If riches increase, let him not set his heart upon them. Let him beware of provoking God to say, 'Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee ; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided ? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.' Be enterprising, then ; be prosperous, if it should seem good to the Lord to prosper you ; only let your enterprise and your prosperity be unsullied by the slightest deviation from rectitude : let them be the result of upright dealing, straightforward industry, and honourable skill. Make it clear to the men of this world with whom you have to do, that as you will not take advantage of them, so they cannot take advantage of you. Show them that, whilst your principles restrain you from dealing wrongfully, they do not lead you to act foolishly ; that, instead of blunting your discernment, they give it a finer and truer edge. Convince them that 'the children of light' only judge the more

soundly even in matters of this life because they judge according to truth. It is not seemly that the believing merchant should allow himself to pass for a fool in the things of trade, though he must expect to be charged with folly in the things of the Spirit. It is by such a course, combining sagacity with 'innocency,' manly good sense with simplicity and godly sincerity, that you will best vindicate the holy faith you profess, and justify the Wisdom whose children you are. Thus may you hope to constrain the gainsayers to glorify God in the day of visitation. They may refuse to listen to *our* ministration; they may refuse to lend an ear to *your* words; or you may have to act upon the caution, 'Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you;' but they cannot shut their eyes to the beauty of holiness, nor turn away their ears from the eloquence of a blameless example. This is the simplest and most effectual way of contending with the wicked; even as it is said in Holy Scripture, 'He that keepeth the commandments contendeth with the wicked.' No controversy is so effectual as that of the holy liver with the unholy, that of the honest dealer with the dishonest, that of the consistent saint with all the worldliness, ungodliness, vanity, selfishness, and turbulency of the scene in which he lives and labours.

Whilst, however, we are to be supremely jealous for the honour of God in our own conversation, we ought to extend that jealousy to the conduct of our Christian brethren. These have special charge of the name and truth of God. As for the 'mixed multitude' who name the name of Christ, they can hardly be confounded with His cause. It is not to *them* the godless look as Christ's witnesses; it is not *they* who can betray Him most sorely. It is the little flock who strive to act up to their profession, and who are therefore *branded as* exclusive, sanctimonious, peculiar—these are

they with whom the glory of God is identified on earth, and who have it most in their power either to belie or to justify 'the wisdom which is from above.' Over these, therefore, we are bound to watch with a holy solicitude—not as censors, much less as accusers of the brethren—but as those who 'consider one another to provoke unto love and good works,' as those who are mindful of the exhortation, 'Thou shalt not suffer sin upon thy neighbour; thou shalt in any wise reprove him.' 'Faithful are the wounds of a friend.' If you see your 'brother sin a sin which is not unto death,' not only *ask God*, but also *warn him*. Beware of making light of the faults of your fellows because they belong to your party, or because they hold an orthodox creed. Rather feel them with special sensitiveness, not indeed in a harsh and censorious spirit, which many mistake for godly zeal; but so as to bemoan them in private, and to tell them, not to others, but to the transgressors themselves. This is the part of a friend and a brother.

Yet not only when 'that Holy name by which we are called' is defiled by His own people are we to be pained; but we must keenly feel blasphemy and contempt poured upon it in the so-called Christian world, and in the unbelieving world at large. It is a sign that our godliness is of a low and torpid character when we are little grieved by the dishonour which our Master undergoes from the wicked. It was not so with the prophets of old; one of whom exclaimed, 'Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake Thy law;' and again, 'My zeal hath consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten Thy words.' Such were the sentiments of holy men of old; and such is the expression of the mind which God loves to see in His people. A hard, cold, insensible spirit He beholds afar off; but in the tender and susceptible soul He delights. When of old He gave, as Ezekiel in vision saw, commission to His angels with their slaughter weapons to execute judgment on His apostate

people, He first bade one amongst them who was clothed with linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side, to go through Jerusalem, and 'set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sighed and that cried for all the abominations that were done in the midst thereof.' Those mourners in Zion were thus set apart by God for Himself; near them the destroyers were not suffered to come. And should judgments come, as they may come soon, as they will come ultimately on apostate Christendom; should the power of 'The Man of Sin' once more rally for persecution, or infidel anarchy spread desolation on every side, there is much reason to infer that the faithful few, who have witnessed in public and wept in private, will be sheltered in the evil day. It shall be said to them, 'Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself, as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast.' How sweet will sound that 'still small voice' to them when the tempest shall be mantling, and the distant thunder bursting on the affrighted world!

Happy for us if we are comparatively indifferent to reproach cast upon ourselves, because so much more alive to dishonour done to our Redeemer. Happy for us, if the fearful desecration of His day; the profaneness and impiety pouring forth from the press; the overflowing tide of dissipation and debauchery; the horrible prevalence of drunkenness and excess rushing down our streets; the loathsome crimes which disgrace our favoured land, and open the mouths of our adversaries against us—happy for us, if we regard these things—not with bitterness, not with self-righteous complacency, not with scornful disdain—but with shame, and humiliation, and heaviness of heart—bemoaning them in our closets, and testifying against them in our lives.

Nor must the faithful be indifferent to God's honour as *involved in the government of the nation*. They cannot be

if they hold, as they ought to hold, that the Lord is King of kings and Lord of lords ; that by Him 'kings reign and princes decree justice.' Maintaining this, they cannot but maintain that the nation, in its national capacity, ought to avouch the Lord for its God ; ought to legislate for the furtherance and vindication of His truth ; ought to discountenance heresy, and repress profaneness and blasphemy ; ought to conform its laws to the divine Word, and recognise in every thing its dependence on the divine blessing. When, therefore, God is betrayed in the high places of national assembly ; when His truth is sacrificed to a pitiful state policy ; when the question is not what is right, but what will serve a passing end, or secure a party purpose ; when a selfish, shifting, pusillanimous expediency usurps the place of eternal principle ; and when the opinions and views of the worldly-wise override the decisions of that Word which liveth and abideth for ever—then the people who know the Lord must not only mourn in secret, but lift up their voice like a trumpet, and affirm the eternal rights of the Most High. Away with the vile sentiment, so popular in these latter days, that nationally we have nothing to do with religion ; that in the exercise of his political rights and the discharge of his political functions, the Christian may consult commercial interests, or have regard to party considerations, but that he is to ignore altogether the claims of faith and the counsels of Scripture.—What ! a man is to fear God in the family, but to forget Him in the polling-booth ! In such godliness there must be some fault at the core. We are not indeed to be politically religious—that is hypocrisy ; but we are to be religiously political—that is consistency. Would that this land were alive to the high position which God has given her, and to the awful responsibility involved in that position ! As to Israel of old He gave, so to this country in the present dispensation He has given, the custody of His word in its purity and integrity, and the guardianship of His

worship in its spirituality and simplicity. Yet, for years, successive governments have subordinated God's word and worship to hollow conciliation and secular policy—disregarding the dictates of the lively oracles, and sanctioning the debasement of the worship of Him who is a spirit, and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth. But the responsibility for all this recoils largely on the constituency of the country. The electors choose the representatives who legislate falsely. How much therefore rests on the electorate ! Every faithful man who possesses the franchise ought to regard it as a sacred trust from God, to be exercised for the good of the country and the honour of God. In order to exercise it aright, he ought to ask direction in prayer ; he ought to give to religious considerations the supreme weight in his decision ; he ought to arrive at his conclusion in the fear of God. This is what we ask of Christian citizens. We may differ in judgment, we may hold diverse political views—but at least let us unite in upholding the supremacy of God in all matters, public as well as private, civil as well as ecclesiastical. I will not, however, pursue this subject now, as I shall have to touch upon it again next Sunday. Nor shall any fear of being charged with trenching on political ground deter me from speaking out boldly on a point where misconception of the grossest kind widely prevails. The clergy are national as well as parochial watchmen ; they must follow the example of the prophets of old, who challenged submission to their Master's claims in the palace no less than in the cottage, in national counsels no less than in domestic affairs. God forbid, then, that we should be afraid or ashamed to contend manfully for the right of God to rule in all and over all !

It remains that I enforce upon you some of the lessons of wisdom which my subject suggests. Whilst the world makes an idol of reputation, we must not esteem it lightly. *Only let our aim be single.* The world regards it as an end ;

we must regard it as a means to an end. Self is the object of the world's honour ; Christ of the believer's. If he shrinks from reproach, it is when he fears that it may in any wise reflect upon Him whose name he bears. He values a good name only in the Lord. He will take pleasure in reproaches for Christ's sake. How incomparably elevated is such a spirit above the spirit of worldly honour !—that spirit which will goad a man to risk being murdered, or becoming a murderer, rather than encounter the scorn of the foolish world. Jealousy for the honour of our Master will cast out this proud selfish sentiment. Very gracefully did the holy and courageous Colonel Gardner say to one who had challenged him, ' You know I am not afraid to fight, but I am afraid to sin.' That was true heroism, the sense of honour which comes from God—a principle as much surpassing the tinsel substitute for it, of which the world makes boast, as the glorious sun in the firmament transcends the painted sun on the signboard of a tavern. The one is rational—real—sublime ; the other a pretentious mockery—a glittering hypocrisy. See to it, beloved, that your star of honour be the honour of your Lord !

Never forget that you cannot maintain this high standard unless you have the Spirit of God. It is He who must form in you the mind which was in Christ Jesus ; who, in the prospect of shame, and outrage, and agony, simply prayed, ' Father, glorify Thy name.' Let Christ be formed in you the hope of glory, and then will you seek the honour that cometh from God only—then will you be crucified unto the world and the world unto you—as the needle true to the lodestone is uninfluenced by other attractions.

Above all, beware that the way of righteousness be not evil spoken of through your misconduct. ' It must needs be that offences will come, but woe unto him by whom the offence cometh.' ' Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ.' Consistency will make you bold ;



inconsistency, weak and cowardly. It was a keen and cutting, but merited, rebuke which was once administered to a noisy, unstable professor by a venerable minister ; the former had vauntingly said, 'I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ : ' — 'Ah ! but,' rejoined the latter, 'the gospel of Christ has much reason to be ashamed of you.' They are the worst enemies of the cross of Christ who assume it to betray it ; who make it the badge of licentiousness, instead of the symbol of purity. Let your lives be in harmony with your lips. Let your characters be as crystals, to reflect around the light which grace enkindles in the soul, not as dark lanterns to conceal, or stained reflectors to discolour, the heavenly flame. Never 'confer with flesh and blood.' Beware of a double mind. Pursue with unswerving steadiness the path of duty. Take no thought of consequences. Do rightly, and you cannot be running any risk. There is no danger save in doing wrong. 'By well-doing put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.' Compel them to respect your uprightness, however they may hate your sanctity. So did some consistent students in one of our colleges when they extorted from their principal, who was strongly prejudiced against their views, the emphatic testimony — 'I hate the notions of these saints, but I admire their conduct.'

Let me animate you in aiming at the glory of God. How it will elevate you ! It will make you like the eagle, whose eye is on the sun, and whose flight is above the clouds. It will supply you with a motive ever mighty, and with an object ever satisfying. It will prove to you a pole-star always beaming brightly on your path, whether in sorrow or in joy, whether amid darkness and tempest, or amid clearness and calm. It will tinge the murkiest clouds with silver. It will trace a track athwart the stormiest seas. Glorify God — then will you live a life worthy of your mysterious and deathless being. We were not designed to be mere engines for scraping together shining dust ; nor mere machines, to

obey the external impulse of circumstances. No, we were fearfully and wonderfully made, sublimely and angelically endowed, that we might fulfil the will and mirror the glory of 'the Lord God Omnipotent.' Rise to this—and you rise to Eden. Thanks be to God, that we can be raised through the riches of His grace by Christ Jesus! Waste not, then, your energies on any thing short of the divine glory. Thus will you attain to everlasting distinction. For them that honour the Lord, He will honour; but 'they that despise Him shall be lightly esteemed.' Be 'valiant for the truth upon the earth.' Let not the Holy name you bear be reproached, and you not vindicate it; nor the Word of God assailed, and you not plead for it as for your life. Let the fear of God cast out all other fear, and the love of God swallow up all other love.

God grant it, brethren, that you who are plunged in business, and especially that you who are yet young in public life, may retain a tender conscience—a sensitive scrupulosity about disgracing the Christian name! Suffer not contact and collision with the world to blunt the edge of your moral sensibility. Shrink from the Satanic suggestion—'I must take leave of my scrupulousness, or I must take leave of success.' Translate the sentiment—and to what does it virtually amount? Is it not, 'I must serve Satan, or I cannot prosper—he is greater than God?' What! You startle at the naked blasphemy! Shrink, then, from the conduct in which it is involved. Measure success by the standard of eternity. Serve God—and you must succeed. If you fail of sublunary gain, yet will your light affliction, which is but for a moment, 'work out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' Say then in your heart—say, whatever temptations may beset you—'I am not bound to be rich, but I am bound to be faithful—I am not bound to bequeath a vast fortune to my posterity, but I am bound to lay up treasure in heaven—I am not bound to

be courted and admired as the most successful merchant on 'change, but I am bound to give such an account of my stewardship to God in the last day as that I may hear Him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful in a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." God Almighty grant that such may be your stewardship in time, and such your testimony and your triumph in the Great Day!

## LECTURE XII.

### NEHEMIAH'S ZEAL FOR THE SANCTUARY.

'We will not forsake the house of our God.'—NEH. x. 39.

THE Lord chose Israel to be unto Himself a peculiar people; He ordained them to be the guardians of His spiritual worship, and the repositories of His lively oracles. So long as they kept those oracles undefiled—walking according to their statutes; so long as they maintained that worship undebased—eschewing idols and cleaving to their glorious temple—God was with them, and whatsoever they did had His blessing upon it; no weapon formed against them prospered, and their enemies fled before their face. But when they forsook His laws and made His word of none effect through their traditions; when they either profaned or abandoned the place where His honour dwelt—defiling His worship with superstition and idolatry—then He turned to be their adversary and fought against them. He gave up their city to destruction, and their beautiful house, where their fathers had praised Him, to utter desolation. Their enemies prevailed against them, they were carried away captive into Babylon, and they hung their harps upon the willows by the waters' side; for they that carried them away captive, required of them then a song and melody in their heaviness. But after seventy years of tribulation, God hearkened to their cries: He thought upon His people, and pitied them for His name's sake. He caused Cyrus to issue

a decree that Israel should return to their land. Multitudes hastened back to the home of their heart. They rebuilt their temple ; they gradually, under the guidance of that illustrious leader whose character we are dwelling upon, raised from the dust the walls of their city ; and now the work, through the good hand of their God upon them, was brought to a happy consummation. Then kept they a solemn festival, and accompanied it with deep humiliation—mingling their sorrows and confessions with their joys and thanksgivings. After that, they renewed their covenant with God ; family after family, each represented by its head, subscribed and sealed the holy compact. They bound themselves to restore to God's house the tithes and sacrifices which the law ordained. Yea, and though impoverished and oppressed, such was their rekindled love to the sanctuary, that they voluntarily undertook to give of their own free-will, over and above what the law demanded, such things as were needful for the full service of the temple. And thus it was that, chastened and taught, penitent and grateful, remembering how their fathers had deserted the habitation of the Lord and how fearful had been the consequences—the whole assembly, in unison with their governor, protested with one mind and one mouth, 'WE WILL NOT FORSAKE THE HOUSE OF OUR GOD.'

The spirit of Nehemiah was sublimely devotional. Whether we contemplate him on his knees in his closet, or whether lifting up his heart whilst standing in the midst of the workmen on the wall, or whether in the temple with the great congregation pouring out his heart in the full tide of worship—we see that he was distinctively a man of prayer. Happy the men of business who breathe the same spirit. He did not suffer his occupations to secularize his devotions, but he hallowed his occupations by his devotions ; the latter armed and animated him for the former, the former braced and stimulated him for the latter. No one stands more in *need of the ordinances* of the sanctuary than he who is most

afloat on the busy world ; none is more dependent on those ordinances for keeping alive the flame of godliness in his breast. At the same time, none is more in danger of being estranged from the temple by the absorbing force of business, by the thirst for gain, and by the seduction of surrounding example ; none is more strongly tempted to let earthly care encroach upon the Sabbath, and either to prefer the counting-house to the house of prayer, or to let the shadow of the former overcast the latter. It is therefore my purpose, beloved, to stir up your minds, by pressing upon you some simple reasons, in the first place, why you should say of ' the habitation of God's house,' ' we will not forsake *it* ;' and in the next, why you should say of our national Church, in one of whose sanctuaries you are wont to worship, ' we will not forsake *her*.'

In fairness, it cannot be thought unreasonable at a juncture like the present in the history of our land, and it ought not to be thought inconsistent with charity the most enlarged and catholicity the most unreserved, that we should seek to establish you in an enlightened, tolerant, but affectionate, attachment to the Church of your fathers. May ' the good Spirit ' of God guide us into the knowledge and love of the truth whilst we wait upon His word !

The arguments to dissuade you from ' forsaking the assembling of yourselves together ' are plain and unanswerable. God has clearly ordained public worship. He made man to be social—social in virtue of his sorrows, his joys, his wants, his affections, his relationships. But if he formed men to be social in things natural, He no less formed them to be social in things spiritual. The isolation of selfishness is of sin ; the union of love is of God. But union is cherished by communion, and communion strengthened by united worship. The faithful ought therefore to assemble themselves together in their Master's name. Accordingly, fellowship in worship may be traced from the earliest period.

It seems not improbable that, as our great poet has represented, even in paradise the primitive pair had some chosen bower whither they resorted to offer up their stated homage to their Maker. But be that as it may, no sooner do we find men beginning to call upon the Lord after the fall, than we find them calling upon Him in fellowship. Where the patriarch pitched his tent, there he built his altar; and round that altar the household stately gathered themselves whilst the patriarchal priest offered the family sacrifices. Then, as soon as ever God had singled out a people for Himself, He bade them raise a tabernacle of witness and of worship, giving the minutest instructions for its construction, its furniture, and its ordinances. He added this memorable promise, which remains in all its force, 'Wherever I record My name I will come to thee and bless thee.' And gloriously did He record His name—first in the tabernacle, and afterwards, more gloriously still, in the temple. He dwelt between the cherubim over the mercy-seat, and poured His blessing on all who truly sought Him there. Passing on to the Christian dispensation—do we find the assemblies of the saints set aside? Far from it. Jesus honoured the temple. He loved to resort to His Father's house. He was very jealous of its desecration; the zeal of it ate Him up. There He was wont to teach; there He wrought mighty miracles. After He had ascended into heaven, His disciples loved to meet for worship, sometimes in the synagogue, sometimes in the upper chamber, sometimes at the river side where prayer was wont to be made: and no sooner did opportunity serve than they set apart holy places for the ordinances and worship of God. They were mindful that the Holy Ghost had warned them against 'forsaking the assembling of themselves together, as the manner of some was.' Indeed the sentiment of the faithful in every age has been that of 'the sweet singer of Israel':—'*One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the*

house of the Lord for ever, to behold the fair beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple.' If, therefore, any man have the mind of the Spirit ; if he love the Saviour and those whom the Saviour loves—he cannot but say of the solemn assembly, 'I will not forsake the house of my God.'

The special manifestations of the Divine presence vouchsafed in the congregations of the saints ought to endear to us such privileged scenes. Never has the promise failed, 'Where two or three are met together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.' Always have His chosen found that 'the habitation of his house is the place where His honour dwelleth.' They have sought and seen His 'power and glory in the sanctuary.' The history of the Church in all ages is rich in illustration of this fact. The patriarchal altar was many a time illumined from on high. The cloud of glory often rested on the tabernacle of witness. The mystic splendour which shone between the wings of the cherubim, reflecting a radiance on the mercy-seat—that symbol of the propitiation of Jesus—testified that 'God dwelt with men on the earth'—that 'His dwelling-place was in Zion.' There, by voices and by visions, by 'Urim and Thummim,' and by secret communications of His grace, He revealed Himself to His people. And now—what though the temple with its magnificent ceremonial and impressive ordinances has passed away—what though no visible Shekinah irradiates the simple house of prayer—have we no signs, no tokens left? Have we not the substance instead of the shadow ; the spirit in lieu of the letter? If the carnal worshipper sees less—does not the spiritual worshipper see more—abundant glory? 'If the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.' Are there not still memorials of a present Lord amongst us—memorials sublimely simple, exquisitely expressive?—His blessed gospel—His living sacraments—the preaching of His Word? Neither are



there lacking demonstrations of His power and love. His Spirit works mightily, and His cross puts forth its saving energy. True it is that they who come not in faith find Him not here ; but those who come believingly hear a voice the unbelieving do not hear—feel a presence the unbelieving do not feel—enjoy a blessing the unbelieving cannot receive. If then, God manifests Himself surpassingly in the sanctuary ; if He has never failed to betoken His special favour towards the social services of His children, it follows that they who love the Lord and love to meet Him cannot but say, ‘ We will not forsake the house of our God.’

As the sanctuary has been the place of the Lord’s rest, so has it been the scene where He has imparted the richest gifts to His worshippers. On the day of Pentecost, it was ‘when they were all with one accord in one place,’ that ‘suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them : and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.’—It was when the multitude were gathered together to the preaching of the word, that God poured out such a blessing that in one instance three thousand, and in another five thousand, were added to the Church. Examine the history of the Church ever since, and you will find that, of the multitudes of the believing, the largest proportion have been born for eternity in the house of God. It is there God has ever given the mightiest proofs of His power, and the brightest manifestations of His love. If not begotten in the sanctuary, the saints have at least been nursed and nourished there. It is there they have spiritually eaten the flesh and drunk the blood of the Lamb of God ; it is there they have been strengthened with the hidden manna of divine truth, and refreshed with living water, drawn from the wells of salvation ; it is there God has met *with them*, and answered them from above the mercy-seat ;

there have they received special tokens of His favour, and enjoyed precious first-fruits of the heavenly vintage. Many a time has the devout worshipper entered the sanctuary in darkness, and left it full of light; many a time has he entered it sorely beset with temptations, but returned from it with the snare of the fowler broken; oftentimes has he come perplexed, and departed assured; come burdened, and gone back enlarged; come prostrate, and gone back exalted; come mourning, and returned rejoicing; come cold, and gone back enkindled; come secularized, and gone back spiritualized; come weary, and gone back revived; come earthly-minded, and gone back heavenly-minded. And does not God still give testimony to the word of His grace, and to 'the place where His honour dwelleth?' Does he not there still send down the fire from heaven to kindle the sacrifice on the altar of the heart, and give responses, breathed by the Spirit through the lively oracles, to the humble inquirer?

But the servant of God will love the courts of the Lord and not forsake them, because in them he tastes most of heaven below. If you want to realize to yourselves what heaven is, you cannot form a better conception of it than by fixing on the happiest Sabbath, and the happiest hour of worship on the happiest Sabbath, you ever enjoyed in the assembly of the saints. Then and there, withdrawn from the world's vanities and disquietudes; then and there, abstracted from things seen and temporal, and absorbed in things unseen and eternal; then and there, when all was tranquillity without, and all was calm within; then and there, faith almost turned into sight and hope into fruition—all earthly distinctions forgotten, the poor and the rich blended in fellowship and love, the whole assembly worshipping in unison, like many instruments all true to one key-note; then and there, you had a miniature of heaven, you reached the very vestibule of that temple not made with hands, where congregations never break up, and Sabbaths never end. He

then—who loves not such scenes on earth—how could he love the heavenly habitation of holiness? He who has no taste for the communion and the songs of the saints below, how would he weary of the ceaseless thanksgiving and the eternal communion of the glorified in immortality? How can you expect to go to the paradise of God if you have no relish for the table which is spread with its first-fruits here? Need I add that of all men, the busy, harassed, wearied, mercantile man—forced to plunge daily into the dust and din of the world's mart—is the very man who most requires the refreshment and savour of the sanctuary? If the tradesman is not, at least, as earnest on the Sunday as he is on the Monday; if he is not as much bent on the merchandise of wisdom as he is on the gains of commerce; if he never sighs for the return of the day of rest, whilst he longs for the day of traffic—such an one has either never been crucified to the world, or else the world is regaining its hold on his heart. The spiritual vegetation of the soul will soon fade, if the soul thirst not for the dew which distils on the holy hill. Many of you are witnesses that a Sunday passed in living worship sheds a hallowing influence on the days of toil; and that the odour of sabbatical communion with God in the place where He has recorded His name will hang round you throughout the secularity of the week. Some of you are witnesses that, when on the evening of the stated service which forms the half-way well in the week, you have broken away from your places of business, and been glad to go up to the house of the Lord, rich has been the return of blessing and comfort into your bosoms. The very effort which the attendance cost you made the enjoyment all the greater. It is not a healthy sign of the times that our week evening services are not frequented as they once were. They furnish a surer test of thirst for the waters of life than do the services of the Sunday. Besides, they are specially wholesome, as interrupting *the current of earthly care*, and suspending for a little the

play of the overwrought machinery of the mind. Regard then the evening of divine service as an engaged evening. And as you are exact in keeping your appointments with your fellows, much more be scrupulous in keeping your appointments with your Maker. Bid away from you all enticements and occupations which would interpose between you and the temple, by protesting afresh, 'We will not forsake the house of our God.' Alas! with what punctuality do many frequent the counting-house, who are seldom seen in the solemn assembly! How many hasten with eager step to their buying, and selling, and getting gain, who repair with lingering pace to the scene where they ought to transact the affairs of eternity! What numbers who never think of contenting themselves with a single visit to the warehouse on the Monday, yet content themselves with a solitary attendance at church on the Sunday! What numbers are all alive and alert in the exchange, who are sluggish and uninterested in waiting on God!—as though the toys and shadows of time and earth surpassed in magnitude and moment the illimitable realities of immortality!

And now, having suggested some simple reasons why you should not forsake the house of prayer—whatever the name it may bear, if only God is worshipped there in truth, and the name of the Lord Jesus is magnified, and His word and ordinances are faithfully administered—bear with me whilst I press upon you a few plain arguments why you should cling steadfastly to the Church of your fathers—uphold it, and defend it, and do it good. In attempting this, far be it from me to narrow your charity—my sole object is to increase your stability. I would have you appreciate your own privileges, without judging or despising others.

We will not then forsake our national Church, because we hold her to be that primitive branch of Christ's visible Church which was introduced into this land in Apostolic days. Early ecclesiastical records indicate that even before

the apostles had closed their career the faith of Christ had taken root in Britain. Nor do they less clearly show that the Church of which we are members is essentially the same with the Church which flourished amongst our forefathers. Other bodies—however orthodox, and however entitled that we should wish them God-speed in as far as they are faithful—are but offshoots and scions from the original root. Ours is the primitive tree. What though, for a season, it was overlaid with the corruptions of Rome, as nearly every other branch of the Church at one time was—it did not therefore cease to exist; the parasitical exotic did not destroy the tree. And when, at the glorious Reformation, the parasite was rent in pieces, then was the goodly bough set free, and restored to ancient purity. There is in these facts something deeply interesting. It is our privilege to enjoy the shadow of the Church which dates its transplantation to our shores, not a hundred, nor three hundred, but nearly eighteen hundred years ago. It is written, ‘Thine own and thy father’s friend forsake not.’ We see no reason therefore why we should abandon the old structure for any new erection—unless, indeed, it can be shown that God has deserted her courts.

But we hold that our national Church is not more primitive in origin than scriptural in order. We would not exaggerate here. We would not make too much of the candlestick, for the light which it bears is the great thing; yet neither would we set at nought the shape and fashion of the former. We do not indeed find any dogmatic scheme of Church economy laid down in the New Testament; therefore we do not venture to dogmatize on the subject of ecclesiastical organization. Yet we find evidences and indications in the apostolic Church, neither few nor faint, that gradation of order and office existed: so that, ere the apostles themselves—the itinerant overseers of the flock—had all been translated to heaven, they had instituted and established, in many at least of the churches, the threefold order of Bishops,

Presbyters, and Deacons. We find that the ordination of ministers—though probably in conjunction with the Presbyters—and the supreme government in ecclesiastical matters were assigned to the Bishops. Thus much assuredly we may trace in the epistles to the seven churches in Asia, and still more fully in the epistles to Timothy and Titus. To this we may add the testimony of the earliest records of the Church, which concur in bearing witness that generally if not universally, the order and administration of the churches then was very analogous to that which now distinguishes our own. Therefore, without laying an undue stress on the point, we cannot but rejoice that we so closely conform to the primitive pattern, and that in our disruption from papal usurpation we did not make shipwreck of a legitimate episcopacy. Whilst we will not judge or despise those who lack so great a benefit, neither will we be unthankful that we possess it—nor will we lightly quit the bosom of our favoured fold.

The light, however, rather than the lamp, is of highest moment. We cleave to the Church of the land more especially therefore, because she is soundly evangelical in her articles and confessions of faith. Let any man carefully examine the three creeds and the thirty-nine articles which comprehend the summary of our Church's doctrine; let him test them fully by Holy Scripture, and assuredly he will find that they are in harmony with the mind of God as revealed in His own word. He will find the Trinity in Unity; the innate corruption of man; the hopelessness of human salvation by human effort; the full, perfect, and sufficient atonement made by the Lord Jesus Christ; the justification of a sinner wholly and solely through faith in the blood and righteousness of Immanuel; the consequent fruit of good works, as springing infallibly from a living, justifying faith; the renewal and sanctification of the believer by the Holy Ghost; the necessity of holiness; the sovereignty of Divine

grace, and, at the same time, its harmony with human responsibility ;—he will find all these essential truths of Christianity stated and defined in her standards, with a breadth, a precision, a simplicity, a wisdom, a consonance with the express language of the lively oracles, which is unsurpassed by the formularies of any branch of ‘Christ’s Church militant here on earth.’ This glorious profession of faith our Church still maintains. It has neither been mutilated nor alloyed. Whatever unfaithful men may have taught within her borders, whatever innovations they may have striven to introduce into her bosom, however they may have strained their ingenuity to distort her standards, or to torture them into a non-natural sense, those standards still lift up their testimony unmarred, unmuffled, and unchanged. By these we must be judged. To these we appeal. On these we make our stand. They were framed by our martyrs ; and those martyrs sealed them with their blood. Shall we then lightly abandon them ? Shall we set little value on such a treasure ?

Akin to the last is our next reason for adhesion to our Church. She is unrivalled in her liturgical services. Such is their excellency in the judgment of others, as well as of her own children, that many have pronounced upon them the highest encomiums. John Wesley, who—however harshly treated by some in ecclesiastical authority, and however devious in his career of usefulness—never faltered in his attachment to the Church of his birth, nor abandoned her stated worship, said—‘The Church of England is the purest branch of Christ’s church on earth.’ And the learned Grotius, though a Presbyterian, observed—‘The liturgy of the Church of England is the finest form of worship in the world.’ In like manner, the eloquent Robert Hall passed upon it a glowing eulogium, which he wound up by saying, ‘It is placed in the first ranks of uninspired compositions.’ Weigh it fairly, and enter into it spiritually, and you will find *that it fully justifies these encomiums.* For it combines so

much chasteness with exalted fervour, so much simplicity for the plainest mind with so much sublimity for the loftiest; it so unites a comprehensiveness which embraces all worshippers with a detail which reaches every case and specifies every trial; it breathes a spirit of such intimate intercourse with God, of such expansive intercession, of such ecstatic praise, and of such experimental godliness—whilst the whole is pervaded with the power and clothed with the language of Holy Scripture—that we may challenge the world to produce its equal. The last particular mentioned reminds us of a peculiarity in our services which ought not to be overlooked—the honour which they render to the word of God. It is not left to the will of him who ministers whether he shall give you much or little of the pure milk of the word; it is provided that in each service two chapters, one from the Old and the other from the New Testament, shall be read, and that the inspired manual of devotion—the Book of Psalms—shall month by month be used. And who can tell what an amount of divine truth and influence was propagated in our land during the darkest days of ignorance, and even where the pulpit was out of harmony with the desk, by such simple, solemn proclamations of the Bible? The following may be thought by some a weak or bigoted sentiment, but it was expressed by one whom my revered father justly designated ‘The Happy Christian’—he remarked, when censured for frequenting a church where the preaching was defective,—‘Well, at least I always hear two perfect sermons there, the one from a prophet and the other from an apostle!’

It only needs, my brethren, that you enter into the worship of our Church as you ought to do; that you respond, and sing, and chant, with one mind and one mouth, in order that you may appreciate the force and sublimity and fervour of our Liturgy. You will then find how it lives and breathes and glows. You will find that the great difficulty is to reach



its standard of devotion. I can conceive the services of our Church to be so animated—enkindled—unanimous—that were an unbeliever to come into our solemn assemblies, ‘he would be convinced of all, he would be judged of all ; and so, falling down on his face, he would worship God, and report that God was in us of a truth.’ In proof, need I do more than remind you of the ‘Te Deum’—meet to be sung in Heaven ; of the Litany—that stream of deep, expansive, urgent intercession ; of the Communion Service—that matchless tissue of humiliation the most pathetic, thanksgiving the most rapturous, and importunity of supplication the most intense ?

Think it not strange that I argue further, that we ought not to desert the Church of which we are members, because it is allied to the government under which we live. I am well aware that this is a topic which the spirit of modern innovation and latitudinarianism has made distasteful to many who ought to judge more soundly. But I have ever maintained, and shall not shrink from maintaining, that a people which profess Christianity and yet do not honour and uphold it in their national character, will be dishonoured and disowned by God. Religion—the religion of God—is not less the charter of a nation’s prosperity and blessedness now than it was in the days of Israel of old, when the Holy Ghost inspired the sweet Psalmist to exclaim, ‘Happy is the people that are in such a case ; yea, blessed are the people that have the Lord for their God !’ Some indeed contend that since the Jews were under a Theocracy their case furnishes no precedent to us ; but I would remind such persons, that the same economy continued to exist in Israel after they had come to be governed by kings ; so that, first and last, the Jewish church was the palladium of the Jewish state—and that by the immediate ordinance of the Most High. Yea, and is it possible for a government to be too theocratic ? In other words, is it possible to have too much of the faith of

God and of the truth of His word interwoven with the laws, or embodied in the institutions, or pervading the administration, of a country? If the world can have too much of its Creator, then may a people have too much of national Christianity. Far from us be the hackneyed sentiment that religion has nothing to do with politics. *Where it has not—they have to do with Satan.* Are not the affairs of communities as much under Divine control as the affairs of individuals? If ‘princes reign *by* Christ,’ should they not reign *for* Christ? If ‘there is no power but of God,’ if ‘the powers that be are ordained of God,’ if ‘he that resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God’—surely ‘the power’ ought to be exercised in conformity to the Divine will, and in order to the Divine glory. The union of the Church and the State is not designed to secularize the former—however it may have sometimes done so, the best things being frequently the most abused—but the true purpose of the alliance is to sanctify the one without secularizing the other. Whatever the practice, the principle is right. If it be objected, ‘Is it right, then, to establish a false religion?’ I answer no; but it is right to establish the true. The fault in the case where an impure religion is established does not lie in the establishment of religion—that is right; it lies in the establishment of a corrupt religion—that is wrong.

Were the alliance between our Church and State only carried out into fair and full conformity with the original scheme of our constitution, our government would be the model for the world. Yea, and imperfectly as the theory is realized, what would be the effect were you to untwist from our laws and abstract from our national ceremonies all the golden threads of Christianity which are yet interwoven with them? Would not the result be most disastrous?—No recognition of God in the coronation of our monarchs—no invocation of His guidance at the assembling of our parliaments—no solemn acknowledgment of His name in the

administration of the laws of the land! What! are we to make the politics of our country atheistic, in order to arrive at the climax of modern transcendentalism? God forbid! But if then, there is to be a national avouchment of God, there must be a certain form according to which that avouchment shall be made. That form, in favoured Britain is our Episcopal Church. Therefore we will not lightly abandon her, lest by doing so we should help to weaken a union in which we believe the well-being of a country to be largely involved, and the maintenance of our Protestant privileges and liberties deeply implicated.

Neither will we forsake our ancient Church, because we believe her to be the great bulwark in this land against the mightiest and craftiest foe of the truth and people of God that has been permitted to usurp authority on earth. I speak advisedly. Doubtless there are many *in* Rome that are not *of* Rome; but the system of Romanism I look upon as the great 'mystery of iniquity.' Nothing has done so much to dishonour Christ, distort the gospel, and defeat the happiness of mankind, as that apostasy. Nor can I regard its present spasmodic struggle to regain its former domination, in any other view than as fraught with surpassing danger to the purity of God's truth, the liberty of God's people, and the civil as well as spiritual rights of mankind. It is by no means improbable that for a brief season its stratagems and aggressions may be attended with frightful success. In our own country—the cradle of the Reformation, and for ages the stronghold of Protestant truth—that once decrepid and impotent intruder—as it was thought—has, through our unfaithfulness on the one hand, and the compromising policy of our rulers on the other, assumed an attitude and wielded an influence no less menacing than astounding. And what then is the great barrier which 'lets' the achievement of her dark designs in our own nation, and *through* our nation, in Europe at large? Can there be a

doubt that it is our national establishment? What though Rome has smuggled her Jesuits and her Jesuitism into our very sanctuaries for the purpose of undermining and betraying us—what though she strives to represent our Church as symbolizing and sympathizing with her—what though she has bewitched with her sorceries many of our pastors, and seduced by her intrigues not a few from our flocks—what does all this prove? It proves that she is well aware that the Establishment is the grand obstacle in the way of her domineering ambition. Hence the concentration of her forces on the one point. Hence the comparative indifference with which she regards dissenting bodies. Could she but rend asunder the Church and State, she feels that victory would be hers. She knows well that a State Church there will be. The only question is—shall she be a tolerant and faithful spouse, or a despotic and merciless mistress? Displace the one—and you replace the other. Break up the Establishment—as some, alas! would do, from whom better things might have been expected,—or throw open its gates and admit the enemy—as others are traitorously and insidiously attempting to do—and there seems small hope but that Britain, and, with Britain, Europe at large, will lie prostrated anew beneath the iron heel of ‘the man of sin’—lie crushed and bleeding, till the last judgments of God come upon that ‘son of perdition,’ and upon all those who, having partaken of his sins, must receive of his plagues. If, therefore, we love our land of liberty, and prize the freedom we enjoy; if we treasure the word of God, and the unfettered circulation and unrestricted use of it—alike in the hovel by the peasant, as in the palace by the prelate; if we love to worship God according to our consciences—no man making us afraid; if we delight in sending the message of light and peace to the darkest regions of the earth; if we shudder at the thought of propagating the paganized Christianity of tradition in lieu of ‘the glorious gospel of the blessed God;’

if we are 'very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts,' and very zealous for the honour of His Son ; if we value our once matchless constitution—the envy of our foes, and the admiration of our friends ; if we loathe the very idea of becoming the dupes and serfs of that lawless priestcraft which arrogates to itself the sceptre of the universe ; if we recoil in horror from a bondage, mental, moral, civil, social, spiritual—the deepest and most degrading to which mankind have ever been subjected—then let us not forsake, and by forsaking help to dislocate, our great national breakwater against the popish deluge which once more threatens to overwhelm us. Let every man do his duty in this crisis. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. Let every man beware lest he should unwittingly betray or compromise the 'liberty wherewith Christ has made us free.' A man may not intend to do so ; he may act conscientiously ; he may think that he is doing God service in assailing the union of Church and State ; but should he find, when too late, he had been blindly imperilling our spiritual privileges, and undermining those liberties which cost our martyrs their blood—bitter will be his self-reproach, and bootless his remorse.

But, above all, we will not forsake our Church, because the God of our Church has not forsaken her. Verily, He might justly have cast her off ; for, whilst her privileges and advantages have been unsurpassed, her unfaithfulness has been terrible. What practical abuses have deformed her in times past !—how many are still unredressed ! What misapplication of her resources has there been ; what departures on the part of many of her pastors from the simplicity that is in Christ ; what a lack of evangelical tone has been, and still is, in many of her pulpits ; how many are there who were once her children have been forced out of her pale by want of accommodation in her bosom ; how many at one time abandoned her fold, because unwisely and harshly treated, whom judicious treatment and wise forbearance would have

retained in her communion ; how many scandals still disfigure, how many divisions still disquiet her !—Do we justify these things ? God forbid !—Do we make light of them ? No, we bewail them.—Do we wish to cloak them ? No, we would confess them to God, and acknowledge them before men. Humiliation, not exultation, becomes us. But, admitting all these things, we fear not to ask—Has God withdrawn from her ? Has He taken away His Holy Spirit from her ? If He had—how could she have retained her pure confession of faith and her spiritual formularies of worship, despite of all these occasions of peril and weakness ? If He had—how could these latter days have witnessed such a signal revival of godliness and truth as has taken place within her borders ? We would not boast, nor contrast ourselves invidiously with others ; but justice compels us to say, that if other bodies have life and love, so have we—if others have truth and power in their ministrations, so have we—if they have trophies of grace—sinners converted to God, backsliders brought home to their Father's house again—so have we ;—if they have ' epistles of Christ known and read of all men,'—models of spirituality, and integrity, and consistency, and zeal, and love unfeigned—so have we ;—if they have abounded in ' the work of faith, and labour of love,' and riches of liberality in the service of the Lord—we more—as witness the millions upon millions of money freely given by churchmen, during the last few years, for the extension of the means of grace at home and abroad ; witness the thousands of churches which they have builded ; witness the thousands of nurseries which they have provided for the tender plants of the rising generation ; witness the galaxy of benevolent institutions with which they have adorned the country ; witness our missions in all parts of the earth, to Jew and Gentile, Mahommedan and Papist ; witness our missionary folds and flocks which God has given us in almost every heathen land, so that the children of our Church's

latter days are more than the children of her youth! To God, and to God only, be the praise.

True, some of her ministers have betrayed their trust, and striven to corrupt the simplicity that is in Christ—but have not others been foremost in their godly jealousy for the maintenance of ‘the truth of the Gospel?’ True, some have become the victims of so strong a delusion, as to believe the great ‘lie,’ and go to Rome, as ‘the ox goeth to the slaughter, or the fool to the correction of the stocks;’ but have not others been amongst the very first and boldest to sound an alarm in the Protestant camp, and to lift up a standard against the enemy, who has been coming in like a flood? If, then, the Lord has not forsaken our Church, neither will we forsake her. Deeply as we must deplore her deficiencies, and earnestly as we must long and labour for the removal of the many stumbling-blocks which disgrace her,—we cannot but cling to her, because we think we may still write upon her gates—‘The Lord is there.’

Thus then, brethren, I have given you a few simple reasons why, in the first place, you should never heedlessly absent yourselves from the worship of the sanctuary; and why, in the next place, you should not be shaken in your attachment to the Church of your country.

Men of business—do not rob the house of prayer, lest you should rob your own souls. If you keep your engagements with men, will you fail in your engagements with your Maker? If you go eagerly to the mart, will you not go earnestly to the temple? Let the busiest man on the Monday, be the most diligent man on the Sunday. If you are all life on the one day, and all listlessness on the other, where is your treasure? If you have no relish for the brief services of the earthly tabernacle, how would the unending worship of the eternal temple pall upon your taste! Omit no opportunity. The one you causelessly pass by may be the very one *that would have conveyed the richest blessing to your soul.*

Cherish the sanctuary, as well as frequent it. Suffer me to remind you that the great man on whom our attention is fixed, was very zealous for the maintenance and honour of God's house. Copy him in this respect. Lean not on the State to exempt you from the duty—ought I not rather to say the privilege?—of lengthening the cords, and strengthening the stakes, and sustaining the ministrations of your Church. Let your free-will offerings for this purpose be given in the spirit, if not in the measure, of her who 'cast all her living' into the treasury. There has indeed been a noble rally amongst the children of the Church, during the present century, for the purpose of meeting the spiritual exigencies of the population throughout the land—and not least in our own city and neighbourhood. There is, however, a wide and necessitous field still before us. Let us not be content till the lap of our Church is broad enough to nurse, and the bosom of our Church ample enough to cherish, all her offspring. Let us gird ourselves anew to the task. Would that more of our men of wealth could be induced to consecrate their riches and their energies to the enterprise! They build themselves magnificent mansions, they purchase lordly estates, they bequeath unwieldy heritages to their posterity—to be spent, perhaps, in gambling, debauchery, or show—to prove a snare and a curse to their descendants. Is not this to walk in a vain shadow? Is it not to 'sow the wind and reap the whirlwind?' Had they made to themselves 'friends of the mammon of unrighteousness;' had they loved our nation and built us synagogues—then would they have laid up 'in store for themselves a good foundation against the time of trouble.' Here is an ambition worthy of a renovated and undying soul.

At this critical juncture, when clouds big with terror are darkening the sky, be true to your country, your Church, your sovereign, and your God. You may be told that there is no danger, no sinister omen; many cry 'peace and safety';



but surely they must be false prophets—unobserving, undiscerning, or Jesuitical. For if ever there were a period since the Reformation when the Protestantism of Europe was deeply imperilled—if ever there were a crisis when the fidelity, the consistency, the Protestant bearing of this country—the refuge of the persecuted, the home of truth, the citadel of liberty—was of unspeakable moment to the whole world, that period—that crisis is the one on which we are entering. Under God, England is set for the defence of the truth on behalf of mankind : under God, the faithful, throughout the whole earth, look to her for the maintenance of the pure gospel and the vindication of the sacred freedom to worship God according to His word. The Lord God Omnipotent strengthen and harness us for the struggle ! The Lord, the Spirit, endue us with boldness to resolve, and with might to carry out the resolution—come what may—  
' we will not forsake *the Word of our God*—we will not forsake *the House of our God*.'

## LECTURE XIII.

### NEHEMIAH'S ZEAL FOR THE SABBATH.

‘ Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the Sabbath-day ? Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city ? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the Sabbath.’—*NEH.* xiii. 17, 18.

As God appointed His Holy Day for the individual to keep it to His glory ; so He appointed it for the nation as a sign of His covenant with a people. Viewed in this light, the desecration or the sanctification of the day of rest is largely the criterion of a Christian country's faithfulness or infidelity ; and will prove, in the result, the main hinge of the prosperity or the downfall of that kingdom. It was in this view that God spoke of His day when He said, ‘Hallow my Sabbaths, and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I am the Lord your God.’ It was in this view He spoke of it when He declared that He would pour forth His fury upon Israel because they had defiled His Sabbaths ; and it was in the same light He regarded it when He said, ‘If ye will not hearken unto me to hallow the Sabbath-day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem, on the Sabbath-day ; then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the

palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched.' As God had threatened, so had He done. The desecration of His day was one of the most crying of the sins of Israel. Their dispersion, desolation, and captivity had been the consequence. And now that God had brought back a remnant, who had restored the Temple, and raised from ruin the walls of their holy city—every thing depended on their faithfulness to God, on their steadfastness in His covenant. No marvel, then, that their zealous ruler was jealous over them with a godly jealousy, as for the honour of the House and Name of God, so for the authority and sanctity of His day. He was, therefore, filled with just dismay, holy agitation of mind, and righteous indignation, when he witnessed what he thus describes—'In those days saw I in Judah some treading wine-presses on the Sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses ; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all manner of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath-day : ' and 'I testified against them in the day wherein they sold victuals. There dwelt men of Tyre also therein, which brought fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the Sabbath unto the children of Judah and in Jerusalem. Then I contended with the nobles '—who seem to have partaken with the people in their unhallowed gains, or who at least had taken no steps to put a stop to the profanation—'I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the Sabbath-day ? Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city ? Yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the Sabbath.' Nor was he satisfied with simply protesting against their conduct. As a ruler he took steps to enforce that which he inculcated. 'And it came to pass, that when the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the Sabbath, I commanded that the gates should be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till after the Sabbath ; and some of my servants set

I at the gates, that there should no burden be brought in on the Sabbath-day. So the merchants and sellers of all kind of ware lodged without Jerusalem once or twice. Then I testified against them, and said unto them, Why lodge ye about the wall? if ye do so again, I will lay hands on you. From that time forth came they no more on the Sabbath. And I commanded the Levites that they should cleanse themselves, and that they should come and keep the gates, to sanctify the Sabbath-day.'

How noble the example which this devoted man thus bequeathed to the Church! He not only sanctified the Sabbath himself—giving a pattern to the people; but he stood in the breach to avert the displeasure of God by vindicating the honour of the sacred day, wielding for that purpose the authority with which he was invested as a ruler.

Our subject, then, is the Holy Day, and the man of business in relation to it—how he ought to recognise and uphold its authority, how he ought to enter into its spirit, and how he ought to realise its blessings. These three branches of illustration will embrace the entire subject. Let us look to the Spirit of God to write the law of the Sabbath on our hearts, and to make it to us a law of liberty by making it to us a law of love.

In the outset, it behoves us solemnly to recognise the divine authority of the day of rest. We ought to be fully persuaded in our minds on this point. It underlies our whole subject. If a man be loose and speculative here, it is clear that he will be capricious and unreal in his observance of the ordinance. It is strange that there should ever have arisen any question in the case so manifest in the mind of God on the subject. The doubt can hardly have sprung from the head; it must have originated in the heart—the 'evil heart of unbelief.' Men have disliked the restraint of the day, and have, therefore, set to work to weaken its obligation. Alas! that some from whom better things might have been ex-

pected should have lent the weight of their names to such an attempt. They must not, however, influence us—to the law and to the testimony alone we appeal.

The time and purpose of the institution of the Sabbath ought to silence all controversy as to the universality and perpetuity of its obligation. It was instituted for Adam in the time of his innocency, when the whole human race was yet in his loins; it could not therefore be designed for a particular people, it must have been intended for mankind in general. It was ordained in commemoration of an event which equally relates to all generations—the consummation of the work of Creation. The ordinance was consequently as long anterior to the Mosaic law as was man himself. That law did not therefore enact—it only confirmed the law of the Sabbath. It is true that Scripture history is silent respecting the observance till the time that Israel sojourned in the wilderness; but it is no less true that Scripture history is silent on several other salient subjects during the same period. Meantime, we have strong presumptive evidence that it was sanctified from the beginning by those who called upon the name of the Lord, though its sanctification by them is unrecorded. For when it is again brought to view, it is as an ordinance recognised and regarded by the Israelites, and that antecedently to the giving of the law from Sinai. When receiving instructions respecting the gathering of the manna, they were simply directed to gather and prepare a double portion on the sixth day, because the morrow would be ‘the rest of the Holy Sabbath unto the Lord.’ Thus the institution reappears on the current of inspired history, not as a stranger, but as a familiar friend—as acknowledged by the people, and upholden by God. This reasoning is greatly strengthened by the mode of expression employed by God when, on Sinai, He enacted afresh the law of paradise. He said not, Thou shalt keep holy the Sabbath-day—but, *‘Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy.’* Clearly, there-

fore, this commandment enforced what was *known*, not what was *new*.'

And where did the Almighty Lawgiver place the precept when He proclaimed it afresh? Was it amongst the ritualistic or the political institutes of Israel? Was it amongst the typical and the transitory? Had he done so, it might have been inferred that the obligation of the observance was limited to one nation, and peculiar to one economy. But the divine legislator wrote the command in the very centre of the moral law. He placed it as the golden clasp that binds both tables of the law together—duty to God, and duty to man. Since, then, God embodied it in the moral law, who shall dare to tear it thence? If He has designated it as a *moral* precept, who shall presume to set it aside as a *positive* one? He who has the hardihood to blot out the fourth, might just as well obliterate the sixth or the seventh command. The same authority which makes the latter, makes the former binding. He, therefore, that should keep the whole law,' and yet offend in this one point, would be guilty of all; for he would snap the chain which rivets all upon us.

And let us not forget that the ten commandments are surrounded with a surpassing majesty and awfulness. Other injunctions were given mediately, through Moses, who wrote them and communicated them to the people. But God Himself, from His pavilion of darkness, proclaimed the moral law. Sinai was all in a flame—the mountains trembled—the trumpet pealed—the thunder roared—the lightnings blazed—whilst the voice of Deity was proclaiming—'REMEMBER THE SABBATH-DAY TO KEEP IT HOLY.' Afterwards, in common with the other nine commands, it was engraven on tables of stone by the Creator's hand; and ultimately lodged in the ark of the covenant, beneath the mercy-seat within the mystic precincts of 'the Holy of Holies.'

Passing from the law to the prophets, we find that in

most of their writings, and especially in those of Isaiah, the holy day is signally magnified ; heavy judgments are denounced against those who violate, and glorious promises made to those who hallow it. And when we come to the New Testament, though there is no express repetition of the commandment, yet Christ Himself glorified it by His obedience, and ratified rather than relaxed its universal authority, by declaring—‘The Sabbath was made for man.’ Here, however, we are encountered by what seems to many a formidable difficulty—the gradual transfer of the Sabbath rest from the last to the first day of the week. To some it seems that the force of the divine command has thus been neutralised. Yet why should this circumstance affect the stringency of the precept? Why should not the sacredness of the institution continue, on whatever day it may please God that it should be observed? The essence of the ordinance lies in the dedication of one day in the seven to God, not in the precise day that is devoted. This, reason itself would infer, since it would be impossible for the same identical time to be kept by the faithful in all parts of the earth. Besides, the mode of expression used in the commandment as it is given in Scripture, leads to the same inference ; for though, through some strange oversight, it is said in our Prayer-book, that God blessed the *seventh* day and hallowed it ; in the Bible it is written, ‘God blessed the *Sabbath*-day and hallowed it.’ So, the consecration and the blessing were attached to *the day of holy rest*, not to the *seventh* day absolutely. Yea, and even under the old dispensation, was there not intimation of a new and nobler Sabbath? How else can we understand the Psalmist when he says, ‘The stone which the builders refused, is become the head stone of the corner. This is the Lord’s doing ; it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the day which the Lord hath made—we will rejoice and be glad in it!’ Surely it was indicated here, *that as the* consummation of the first creation was immor-

talized by the setting apart of a holy birthday to commemorate it; so the elevation of the top stone in the second creation—when the Redeemer had finished His work of atonement, burst the bars of death, and led captivity captive—should have its own special day of high commemoration—overshadowing, but not superseding the memory of the former. Was it not meet that so it should be? For if the first work had glory, how much does the second excel in glory!

—‘Twas great to speak a world from nought,  
 ‘Twas greater to redeem.’

Redemption has eclipsed Creation, as the risen sun shrouds with his splendour the morning-star. Besides, the Sabbath of the seventh day was dimmed, for it reminded us of Eden lost through sin; but the Sabbath of the first day is all glorious, for it tells us of Paradise restored through grace—and points to the endless Sabbath rest that ‘remaineth to the people of God.’ Beautifully and befittingly, therefore, did Jesus rise on the first day of the week, instead of on the seventh, and so hallow and bless ‘the *Lord’s day*,’—making it the first-fruits of our time, as He is ‘the first-fruits of them that slept.’ In like manner, all His chief appearances after His resurrection were on His own selected day. On that day, too, the promised Spirit was poured out upon the apostles, and ‘cloven tongues like as of fire’ rested on their heads. It was on that day the disciples were wont to meet together for breaking of bread and for prayer. It was on that day, ‘when the disciples came together to break bread,’ and Paul preached unto them at Troas, ‘ready to depart on the morrow, and continued his speech until midnight.’ It was of that day the apostle John spake in the opening of the Apocalypse, when he said, ‘I was in the spirit on the *Lord’s day*’—thus proving that the first day of the week was recognised even then by the universal Church as the day of the Lord. And throughout all subsequent ages, has not



the Lord set His seal abundantly on the Christian Sabbath!

There is, then, ample proof that the day of rest is bound upon us by the law of God; that it is no less a clear duty than it is an unspeakable privilege to keep it holy. As such the Spirit writes it on every renovated heart. The appeal may be made to the holiest of the saints. Has Jesus not manifested Himself on that day as on none beside? Has not great grace rested pre-eminently on its solemn assemblies? Has it not been the birthday of unnumbered souls? Has it not been a season of special refreshing and edifying to the flock of Christ? Is it not rich in holy memorials—gracious records—heavenly traditions? In every age and clime, have not His children been all taught of God to prize and reverence His day? Have they not had the fourth commandment, as distinctly as the other commandments, written ‘on the fleshy tables of their heart’—so that spontaneously, not as of compulsion, but of taste and choice, they have ‘remembered the Sabbath-day to keep it holy?’ Thus the Spirit in the heart has witnessed with the Spirit in the word, that the *obligation* of the ordinance *abides*, whilst the *blessedness* of the ordinance is *enhanced*.

Now, therefore, let me invite you to contemplate the spirit in which the man of business ought to keep the day. He should keep it with a solemn reverence of mind. Whatever pertains immediately to God challenges honour and solemnity. Whatever He has inscribed with ‘holiness unto the Lord,’ must be sacred to us. And He has said, ‘Reverence my Sabbaths;’ He teaches us to call them ‘honourable:’ He ‘hallowed’ the day which He set apart for Himself. Far from us, therefore, be lightness and frivolity, secularity and distraction, carnal indulgence or heartless indifference, on the day of God. Let it always shed upon your souls a soothing influence, a vivid sense of things *unseen*.

At the same time, the day which God blessed ought not to be a day of severity and gloom. They scarcely honour it more who observe it morosely and ascetically, than they do who turn it into an occasion of mirth and frivolity. We are told to call it 'a delight.' It is a festival to the Lord. We should put on 'the garment of praise,' not 'the spirit of heaviness,' when we hear the sweet chime of its bells. We should 'enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and unto His courts with praise.' The deepest joy is serious and chastened. Be sober yet be glad. Adorn the day with holy cheerfulness. Let your servants, your children, your friends, see that you enjoy the ordinance; that it is congenial to your spirit; that it is to you a foretaste of the rest of heaven—a day you would like to have last for ever. Never let us forget that if the brief Sabbath of earth be a weariness to us, how wearisome would that Sabbath be to us, if protracted to all eternity! Yet an everlasting Sabbath-keeping is one of the most beautiful and expressive conceptions which the Holy Ghost gives us of the ceaseless fruition of those who shall be accounted worthy to enter the kingdom of heaven.

The great thing is to enter into the *spirit* of the day, not to rest in the cold *letter*. To refrain from secular occupations, to forego worldly pleasures, to abstain from vain conversation, to give special attention to the Bible, to be punctual and decorous in the services of the sanctuary—all this is well; but all this may be, and yet the day be unsanctified in His sight who searches the heart. The soul must be attuned to the day. The outward demeanour must be the reflection of the inward frame. The mind must be disencumbered of its burdens, disentangled from its cares, and, like the unchained eagle, set free to mount up into communion with God. This is the essence of the observance. This must give life and reality to all its services. Then will your Sabbaths be to you vestiges of paradise, green spots in

your pilgrimage through the wilderness, where you will find your freshest springs, and where you will breathe an atmosphere cooled with the dews of heaven. Then will you wish to lengthen, not to abridge, the hours. Then you will ask, not how much, but how little, you can attend to things below on the day set apart for 'things above.' It is the lack of this sabbatic tone that leads so many, who name the name of Christ, to while away the day in listless trifling, or to weave excuses for encroaching on its precincts. By one, urgent business-letters must be read, if not written, on the day;—by another, impending sickness is staved off till the leisure day which can best be spared for nursing it, because they are *only spiritual* concerns that then demand attention;—a third steals a few hours for journeying, because it is the genteel day on which to travel, and because by setting out betimes, he can reach his destination soon enough to attend the evening service, or, having attended church in the forenoon at home, he can afterwards so improve the time as to gain the point where he wishes to begin his business with the Monday's dawn—thus, with wondrous dexterity, saving time, yet satisfying conscience! Are not these things so? Are not many carried away by conformity to the usages of the world in this matter—'by reason of whom the way of godliness is evil spoken of?' And are, then, the engagements of the holy day so insignificant? Ought they to be so lightly postponed to the calls of secular avocation? Is one-seventh of our time too much to devote exclusively to eternity? Are the interests and destinies of immortality subordinate to the gains and losses of threescore years and ten? Have we so learned Christ?—so weighed the worth of the soul?—so estimated the price with which it was bought?

Our influence with our servants and dependants must be used in support of the day of rest. Not only ought we to shrink from unnecessarily employing them, either for our *pleasure* or our profit—not only ought we to secure to them

full opportunity to enjoy the services of the sanctuary ; but we ought to see to it that they avail themselves of the opportunity afforded. Sad will it be, should we give them occasion to infer that the holy day has no holiness for them ; that for us it has its obligations and its duties, but that for them it has neither—that their toil is never to be relaxed—their salvation never worked out. Strive to make it to them, as to yourselves, the brightest, the most refreshing day of the seven.

In order to sanctify the Sabbath, and arrest the current of secularity which is all too apt to overflow the fences of the day, it is highly important that our mercantile men should have what the Jews of old had—‘the preparation,’ when the Sabbath draws on. Happy, therefore, will it be, if recent arrangements for suspending business at an early hour on the Saturday, should enable the Christian merchant, not only to close his counting-house betimes, but to abstract his mind from his speculations, his risks, and his responsibilities—lest haply, like the money-changers and sellers of doves in the temple, he should virtually, though not actually, make the house of God ‘a den of thieves.’ Much depends on the attitude and readiness in which we await the day. We ought, as is so graphically said in the book of Isaiah, to ‘turn away our foot’ from the Sabbath—to halt on its confines, lest in our eager career we should overleap the divine barrier, and with our shoes still on our feet desecrate the sacred enclosure.

The man who is earnest in hallowing the Sabbath himself, cannot fail to be zealous for its observance by his neighbourhood and his nation. He cannot, therefore, but ‘sigh and cry for all the abominations’ which defile the holy season in our own land—for the dissipation and profaneness which rush down our streets ; for our open beer-houses ; for our scenes of bacchanalian carousal and blasphemous diversion ; for our pleasure-gardens and musical saloons, alluring

thousands of the young and heedless into the pitfalls of ruin which they conceal. And what shall be said of the gigantic profanations of the Sabbath which are not only sanctioned, but even required, by the laws of the land? What—of our postal regulations, enforcing, as they do, an almost unrelieved amount of toil on tens of thousands of our fellow-subjects? It is not that we want a law to compel the observance of the day. What we need is a law to restrain men in authority from forcing their dependants to violate the day. It is not that you can make men religious by act of parliament; but you can, by legislative enactment, restrict employers from constraining those whom they employ to be irreligious. As it is, existing laws countenance, nay, in some instances, demand, the infringement of the divine law. By moral, though not by physical force, multitudes are compelled to be Sabbath-breakers. Over these things, every one who is jealous for the Lord God of Hosts, and trembles for the land we live in, will deeply mourn; and by his example, by his protest, by his influence, by his efforts, will do all that lieth in him to check the accumulation of national guilt in this matter—threatening, as that guilt does, to bring down judgments on the nation. Let us never forget that the Sabbath is a token of the covenant of God with our country; it is a rainbow round about our throne, which when bright and clear witnesses that God will not suffer us to be overwhelmed; but which when dimmed and defaced by desecration betokens impending disaster to the community.

But it is time that I should remind the man of business, that as surely as he enters into the spirit of the day, so surely shall he realize its blessings. The Lord ‘blessed’ as well as ‘hallowed’ the day: He not only set it apart for holy purposes, but annexed a special blessing to its observance. It is for our good. It is for our happiness. I love to view it in this light. Duty—authority—these are cold words to use in urging the Christian to do what God bids him, and to

enjoy what God promises him. Rather would I speak to him of grace—of privilege—of blessedness. ‘The Sabbath was made for man.’ It is the gift of love. It is the pledge of peace. It meets our wants ; it suits our frame. True, it is a yoke, but that yoke is easy—a restraint, but that restraint is ‘perfect freedom.’ Why did God separate one seventh portion of human life from the pursuits of time ? Why ! but for the comfort, refreshment, and edification of man, in subservience to His own glory. Nor did ‘the High and Lofty One’ think it beneath Him, in like manner, to secure repose to the ox and the ass—the beasts that toil in our service. Even with a view to the physical constitution of man, the law of the Sabbath is a law of love. One of our most distinguished medical men, when examined by a committee of the House of Commons on the question of the Lord’s day, gave it as his testimony, based on large experience, that the man who does not rest one day in seven will, ordinarily, wear out his energies before the time, and bring upon himself premature decrepitude and death. He added—and it was an interesting addition—that medical science had arrived at the conclusion, that the very proportion of time fixed upon by His Creator is that which man needs for repose. Upon its being observed to him that some of the ministers of religion take no day of rest, he replied that they could not stand incessant effort ; and that, except they would secure an equivalent for the repose of the Sabbath, they must, sooner or later, fall victims to the unrelaxed strain on their energies. How benignly, therefore, has God made provision for the recruitment of our physical nature ! But it is when we contemplate the ordinance, in its bearing on the well-being of the human spirit, that it rises upon our view in all its benignity. It is peculiarly the friend of fallen man ; for if, amid the hallowed scenes of Eden, there was needed a day on which the sinless dressers of the garden should intermit their gentle toil, how much more urgently must blighted,

guilty man, amid the temptations, and cares, and pollutions, and distractions to which he is now subjected, stand in need of one day in seven, to give him opportunity to find and follow the ways of restoration to God, and holiness, and heaven! The Lord's days of His weeks are steps in the mystic ladder up which he may climb till he reach the land where the sun of the Sabbath shall never set, and the worship of the Sabbath never close. Blot out that day—and you would well-nigh blot out the service of God from the face of the earth. Close all our sanctuaries—stop all our Sunday-schools—withdraw all the influences of the day of rest—and what would be the consequences? How would earth's ills be envenomed—earth's woes embittered—earth's toils enhanced! To the Christian man of business the privation would be irreparable. His dearest reminiscences, his richest enjoyments, his brightest hopes, are all bound up with the Sabbath. How subservient is it to his soul's health! How conducive to his peace! How his salt would lose its savour if it were not impregnated afresh by the influence of the holy day!

Can we overrate the blessing of the observance to those of the faithful who are unavoidably harassed and strained from day to day by the overwrought machinery of modern trade? To them, how unspeakable the relief of having the moving power stopped, the whole mechanism of traffic suspended, and being able to withdraw from the din, and hurry, and distraction of the commercial world—exchanging them for the calm of the closet, the communion of the family, the avocations of mercy, and the soothing services of the house of prayer! The sabbath is to such, as the green and watered oasis is to the worn and fevered traveller in the Arabian desert. The dew of the day abides upon their spirits. A Sabbath meetly sanctified gives a tone to the days that follow. The week may be compared to a harp of seven strings; the first—the master cord—gives the key-note to the rest—let

that be tuned by heaven, and the others will sound in consonance. You may forecast the character of the week, from the way in which you begin it—from the tone of your spirit on the day of God. If you have been happy and heavenly then, much of happiness and heavenliness will, ordinarily, pervade your occupations ; but if you were earthly and distracted then, still more of earthliness and distraction will cleave to you when you resume the tasks of life. On the Sabbath, the lamp must be replenished with oil ; on the Sabbath, the loins must be girt anew ; on the Sabbath, ' we buy wine and milk, without money and without price,' that we may be strengthened for our warfare and our journey ! Blessed day !—symbol of grace, bond of fellowship, birthright of the poor, reflection of heaven !—who would not love thee ? who would not seek to taste thy blessings ? Some, indeed, of our philosophising Christians say disparagingly, that every day ought to be a Sabbath to the saint. And so it should be : but who is likeliest to sanctify every day ? Is it not he who most remembers the Sabbath-day to keep it holy ? There are those who would bring down the hallowed day to the level of the days of labour, instead of striving to bring up the latter to the standard of the former—and to do so by making use of the former as a purchase for the purpose. He who knoweth our frame, knew what we had need of, when He ordained for us a day specially consecrated to the things that belong to our peace.

Let me remind you again, that if you love best the day which God has hallowed, that love is to you a pledge and prelibation of heaven. I remember once, in the porch of this very church, at the close of the Sunday evening service, finding an aged woman still lingering, after all her fellow-worshippers were gone, who, on my asking her why she did not hasten home as the night was fast approaching, answered, with pathetic earnestness and simplicity, ' Oh, sir ! I love to linger here : I was wishing that I never had to leave church,



and that Sunday would last for ever.' 'Happy are you,' said I; 'for you will soon have your wish fulfilled, in the enjoyment of a never-ending Sabbath, and of a temple from which the worshippers shall no more go out.' The very God of grace and peace grant us to be like-minded with that simple saint!

Time would fail me to enlarge on the benign influence of a well-kept Sabbath on the community—on the nation at large. How it humanizes, how it harmonizes the people, bringing together the ranks of society, and soothing the asperities of secular intercourse! See how Scotland is distinguished for its observance of the day of rest; and see how high the state of its morality, and how sound and prosperous its social condition! England, with all her faults, contrasts favourably in this respect with Continental nations; so that the strangers who have flocked from all countries to our Great Exhibition, are specially struck with the reverence for the Sabbath which characterises the inhabitants of this land. They are filled with astonishment when they learn, that the stupendous structure on which they gaze was raised, and furnished, and finished, without the sound of a hammer having been heard, without a nail having been driven, on the holy day. Nor were they less astonished to find the doors of the Exhibition so strictly closed on the Sunday, that neither the peer, nor even the artist, anxious to copy various objects in quietness, was suffered to enter on the Lord's day. Not in boasting, but in thankfulness to God, that there is yet so right a sentiment left amongst us, we record these facts. Those who have travelled on the Continent well know, that there is nothing shocks more the British tourist—if worthy of the British name—than the manner in which the day of God is there profaned. Changed into a carnival of amusement, it seems more Satan's '*holiday*' than Christ's *holy* day—the theatres wide open, the ball-rooms thronged, the *bazaars* all alive, the military review or the political banquet

furnishing popular excitement—these are the prominent features of a Continental Sunday. Shame on the British traveller who yields to the current!—he disgraces alike the British and the Protestant name. We owe it to our Protestant principles and institutions, that there is so much homage still paid amongst us to the blessed ordinance. The Romish Sabbath is half formal, half carnal—a forenoon of idolatry, ending in an afternoon of frivolity. And no marvel, when the ‘holiday’ of the Church is held to be paramount to the *holy* day of the Lord of the Church. Let us not, however, ‘be high-minded, but fear.’ Have we not latterly had fearful encroachments on the sanctity of the observance? Are not our unclosed taverns, and our thinly-veiled haunts of riot and revelry on His day, crying to God against us? And are there not even now, mighty efforts making to break down still further the fences of the day? If, therefore, we love our country, and the day which God has made so largely the channel of blessings to our country, we must hold fast the Protestant distinction of an unmutilated Sabbath, as well as of an unadulterated Bible, and an unsensualized ritual. Let lost ground be recovered. Let the haunts of drunkenness and dissipation be closed on the holy day. Let the vagrant multitudes be won to the house of prayer—‘Then God, even our own God, will give us His blessing.’

And now, to my younger hearers, just launching on the sea of business, I would more particularly address the word of affectionate admonition. Engrave it as an axiom on your minds, that to hold fast the Sabbath is to hold fast a sheet-anchor; whilst to abandon its observance is to drift from your moorings. And then, whither may not your unmoored bark be driven? From the very gallows, hundreds have pointed to the first broken Sabbath—when, for the first time, they turned their backs on the sanctuary and their faces towards the haunts of vanity—as the first open step

down the declivity, which has ended in the abyss of ruin. My young friends, sacrifice the sacred hours neither to pleasure nor to business. Say to companions who will allure you to do so—‘We will not’—and to employers who would command you to do so—‘We cannot—do this wickedness and sin against God.’ Fear not. ‘One is your Master.’ Keep His charge, and leave consequences in His hands. I knew and still know a man, who when young, was required by his employer to transact business on the Lord’s day; upon which he said—‘I will come to your place of business at one o’clock on Monday morning, and work till twelve o’clock on Saturday night, but I cannot break the fourth commandment; if you insist upon my doing so, *you* must seek another servant, and *I* another master.’ What was the consequence? He was dismissed, and to all appearance, thrown out of bread. But what was the sequel? After having tried in vain to find a man less scrupulous—but no less punctual and trustworthy—than the one whom he had cashiered, his late employer sent for him again, raised his salary, and placed unlimited confidence in him. Since then, that individual has thriven, and he now fills a public post of considerable importance and responsibility—thus furnishing one exemplification amongst the many instances which have come to my knowledge that God honours those who honour Him, by honouring His day. Let your only labour on Sundays be the labour of love. As you have little time to do aught expressly for God on other days, do what you can on the sacred day, to set forth His glory, and set forward His truth. What a noble opportunity for doing good is presented to you by our Sunday-schools! There, in watering, you may be watered—in teaching, taught—in blessing, blessed.

Let me remind all, that the work to which the Sabbath is sacred is the one thing needful—even salvation through *Christ*, by the sprinkling of His blood, and the renewing of

His Spirit. This is the grand end of the Sabbath—this the grand end of life. Awake, then, to the thrilling interest of the occasion. Imprint the marks of holiness upon your holy days, that so they may not haunt you on your death-bed, and witness against you at the judgment-seat, but rather solace the one with sweet remembrances, and witness for you, before the other, that you received not the grace of God in vain. ‘So shall an entrance be ministered unto you abundantly—into the rest that remaineth to the people of God.’

## LECTURE XIV.

### NEHEMIAH'S HOPE WHEN HE HAD DONE ALL

‘Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of Thy mercy.’—NEH. xiii. 22.

THE bird which soars the highest, builds the lowest nest. Who is there that loves the green fields in the vernal season, but must have watched with interest the joyous lark? Her nest is down in the grass, whilst her flight is up in the sky. Now she is hidden in the brightness of the sunbeams, and can be traced only by the gushing music she pours from on high—now she drops down again, fleet as the flight of an arrow, into her own secret home in the earth. How apt an emblem of him who is taught effectually by the Spirit of God! The more he is lifted up in communion with heaven, the deeper is his abasement in his own eyes. The more he is enriched with the treasures of grace, the more he abounds in the fruits of holiness—the more will he disclaim all merit of his own, and prostrate himself at the foot of the cross. You may have marked the ears of barley how they grow. When they first appear, and whilst their grain is light, they lift their heads towards the sky; but as they fill with corn, they bend towards the dust; and the heavier their freight, the nearer they stoop to the ground. Even so ‘the children of the kingdom;’ the holiest are the humblest, those who bear most fruit have least ‘confidence in the flesh.’ It was *so with the great* apostle of the Gentiles. In his earliest

stage of faith, he styled himself 'not worthy to be called an apostle.' In riper maturity of grace, he described himself as 'less than the least of all saints.' But when he had become such an one as Paul the aged, and was no whit behind the very chiefest of the apostles, when he had 'fought a good fight, and finished his course, and kept the faith'—he spake of himself in yet lowlier style, saying—'Of sinners I am chief.' Thus, as he ascended in holiness, he descended in humility; he more he was honoured of God, the more he abased himself.

Distinguished as we have seen Nehemiah to have been by other graces of the Spirit, we should have been sorely disappointed had we not found him adorned with this crowning virtue—a grace which Augustine held in such estimation, that when he was asked, 'What is the first thing in religion?' he answered—'humility.' 'What the second?'—'humility.' 'What the third?'—'humility.' But we trace in the model which we are commending to you, a beautiful humbleness of mind. There are those, indeed, who find fault with some of his expressions, such as, 'Think upon me, O God, for good, according to that I have done for this people;' and such as the one in this very chapter—'Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for the offices thereof.' They think that such sentiments savour of self-righteousness—that they have more of the spirit of the Pharisee than that of the publican in them. But such persons do not understand the consistency in the divine life of deep humiliation on account of the flesh, with joyful consciousness of the work of the Spirit. A believer may mourn over his secret corruptions, at the same time that he rejoices at what God has wrought in him. Not to recognise and acknowledge the Spirit's work in the soul which He is sanctifying, is to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption; and is

only less blind than for the saint to arrogate to himself what he owes to the Comforter. In proportion to the progress of renewal, will be the progress of spiritual sensibility and discernment in the soul ; and in proportion as these are matured, will be the perception, as of the old man that still hinders and harasses the new man, so also of the new man which is winning the victory over the flesh. The same apostle that said, 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief;' said also, 'Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to youward.' The two sentiments perfectly harmonized in his breast. He knew that in him (that was, in his flesh) dwelt no good thing ; and yet he was equally assured, that by grace he was what he was, and that the grace given to him had not been in vain.

It does not therefore surprise us that Nehemiah should have had a clear sense of the works which God had wrought in him and by him ; and that he should beseech the Lord that those works might be registered in heaven, and adduced at the last day in proof that he had not received the grace of God in vain. For as some one has said excellently, 'The works of the righteous do not go before them to plead for them, but follow after them to witness for them ; they do not enter into the matter of their acceptance, but into the matter of their evidence.'

At the same time, we should have been deeply surprised had Nehemiah put any confidence in the flesh, or failed to take refuge in the mercy of God. It is, therefore, delightful to find that spirit of humility which pervaded his whole career, shining out in the closing passage of his history with surpassing distinctness and lustre. In this series of lectures, *we have now traced the work of God in him and by him ; we*

have traced it in a variety of particulars. We have explored the mainspring of his noble character—the fear of God. We have unfolded the secret of his moral strength—reliance on that strength which is made perfect in weakness. We have examined the channel through which that strength was derived—his devotional habit, his constant waiting upon God. We have investigated the spring of his energy and boldness in enterprise—confidence in the blessing of God, without which nothing is strong, nothing is perfect. We have illustrated his habitual acknowledgment of the Lord, from whom came all his blessings, and by whom all his achievements were accomplished. We have exemplified his steadfastness of purpose, and resoluteness of pursuit—undamped by discouragement, undeterred by danger. We have enlarged upon his uprightness and integrity in all his transactions with his fellow-men—keeping his hands from bribes, and his heart from covetousness. We have admired his godly fortitude and patience in duty—proof against all that malice could menace, or subtlety devise to confound him. We have dwelt upon the holy joy which animated him in serving his Master, and made that service perfect freedom. We have contemplated his unworldliness and unselfishness of mind—how he set loosely to earth, because he had ‘treasure in heaven.’ We have dilated upon his jealousy for the honour of God—how he could not bear to have God’s name reproached, or occasion given to the wicked to blaspheme. We have pondered his zeal for the sanctuary—how ‘he loved the habitations of God’s house, the place where His honour dwelleth,’ and made munificent provision for its services. We have admired his kindred zeal for the day of sacred rest—his determination to hallow it himself, and to restrain others from profaning it. All these glorious attributes we have seen embellishing his character, and shining forth in his actions : yet after all, and when he had done all, he trusted in nothing that he had either gained or done ; but



the more he was laden with the fruits of righteousness, the more he felt himself to be laden with infirmities ; so that, however illustrious he was in the eyes of his fellow-men, he felt that before his God he had no plea to urge, save 'the mercy that endureth for ever.' This, therefore, was his lowly prayer—'Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me, according to the greatness of Thy mercy.' His hope sprang, not from the smallness of his guilt, but from the greatness of the mercy of his God ; he relied not on what he himself had accomplished, but on what the Saviour of sinners should accomplish in the fulness of the time when He should come in the flesh. How interesting to observe that, though the conceptions of believers under the Old Dispensation respecting the exact mode of salvation were dim, yet they themselves clung as earnestly to the mercy of the Lord, as more privileged believers do now ! The precise method in which that mercy, whilst sparing the sinner, should be vindicated from all appearance of connivance at sin—how grace could remit the penalty of the law, and yet neither the requirements nor the sanctions of the law be invalidated :—this was a mystery which it is clear they did not distinctly discern. Not the less, however, did they embrace the promises, and were persuaded of them, and walked by faith in them—yea, in such-wise as often puts us to the blush, so little do we surpass them in devotedness, whilst we so far transcend them in light and liberty.

There would, then, have been a fatal flaw in the texture of Nehemiah's character—one which would have marred the soundness and beauty of the whole, had it been wanting in this fundamental grace—a humble, penitential reliance on the mercy of God. To delineate this distinctive trait of the righteous, in order that you may covet and copy it, is our purpose this evening—and fitly will it finish the model which *I have been* presenting to you for your imitation. The God

of all mercy send us His good Spirit to clothe us with humility, and to constrain us to hope only and hope always in the multitude of His mercies, through Jesus Christ our Lord !

Pride is the parent sin in the universe—it kindled rebellion in heaven. Pride is the parent sin in the world—it introduced disobedience into Paradise. Angels fell, because they ‘kept not their first estate.’ Man fell, because he desired to be ‘as God, knowing good and evil.’ Adam fell, and in him fell the human race. As man fell through pride, he must rise through humility. As he fell by seeking to be as a god, he must rise by learning that he is ‘a worm, and no man.’ As he lost his crown by being unwilling to wear it in dependency on his Creator, he regains it by becoming lowly enough to welcome it as altogether the gift of sovereign grace. One of the chief barriers between man and salvation is the pride of his heart—the fond conceit of his own goodness. However utterly apostate from God, however sinning in every thing he does, because in every thing coming short of the glory of God—such is the blindness and infatuation of his heart, that he is still bent on saving himself; he would fain pass *by* the cross, on the way to the crown. Almost invariably, whenever men begin to feel any anxiety about their future destiny—whether on a sick-bed, or in sorrow, or when disquieted by conscience—they set to work to be their own saviours. Each has his own scheme for making his peace with God—but whether by repentance, or by amendment, or by restitution—self is the hinge of all. Man must be driven off these foundations of sand; hunted out of all his ‘refuges of lies;’ reduced to a sense of helplessness, hopeless, moral bankruptcy; convinced that he cannot so much as think a thought, conceive a motive, or do an act acceptable to God, till he is in Christ, till he is justified freely through the righteousness of Christ, and quickened effectually by the spirit of Christ—before he can be constrained to fly

for refuge, to lay hold upon the hope—the only hope set before a sinner. Then, and not till then, will he stoop low enough to enter in at the strait gate, and become meek enough to travel the narrow way. The beginning of wisdom is, therefore, to awake to the consciousness that you are spiritually dead, and that the sentence of eternal death is recorded against you. For apart from Christ—however beautiful your morality, however bright your honour, however unblemished your reputation—though you may be the idol of your circle, and though men may point you out as a pattern of mercantile probity ;—you must appear in the sight of God as an unreconciled rebel. The Pharisee who prayed, ‘God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are’—and whose professions are not denied—returned from the temple unforgiven ; whilst the publican who, bowed down with a sense of his sin, durst not so much as lift up his eyes unto heaven, but smote on his breast, saying, ‘God be merciful unto me a sinner,’—this man went down to his house justified rather than the other ; ‘for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased, but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.’ Here is the key to acceptance with God. From the depth of despair breaks the dawn of hope. Despair of self heralds hope in Jesus. The abandonment of our own righteousness prepares us for the reception of ‘the Lord our righteousness.’ So long as the wrecked sinner trusts to rafts of his own construction, or clings to fragments of the wreck, he can find no rest nor safety ; but when, loosing his hold of all beside, he grasps the cable stretched out to him by sovereign mercy—or, to change the figure, when he is ‘apprehended of Christ,’ and lifted into the life-boat—the ark of salvation—then he may look back on his peril with calmness, and round on the boisterous billows with peace. One so rescued will never fail to own, ‘I did not make the ark myself—neither did I find it—neither did I enter it, of myself: Jesus provided it ; He brought it nigh to me ; He

delivered me out of the deep waters. He laid hold upon me, as he did on Peter when sinking, and put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto my God.' 'By grace I am whatsoever I am.' 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.'

Be assured, that the more holy a man's spirit becomes, the more sensitive will it become—and the more sensitive his spirit, the deeper and livelier will be his sense of sinfulness. Shut up an individual in a dark apartment, hung round with cobwebs, and defiled with dust, and he will be insensible to its condition; then admit a little light, and he will begin to suspect its state; admit more and more, and the clearer the light, the more clearly will he discern the impurities which were hidden before; yea, though a process of purification may be going on the while, it will seem to him as if the room looked only the more repulsive;—not that its defilements are undiminished, but that the light which reveals them is stronger. So when 'God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in the heart' of a sinner, the light imparted makes manifest to him, at once, the dark secrets of his history, and he discovers in his inner parts things never suspected before; and still, as the 'shining light shines more and more,' it will disclose to him trespasses more multitudinous, and recesses more black—yet, not to drive him to despair, but to shut him up to Christ. Thus it was with Paul—he was 'alive without the Law once; conviction came—and all his fond hopes and confidences were slain; but then—out of self-despair sprang living hope. Dropping his hold of the rope of sand, he clung to the sheet-anchor, 'which entereth into that within the vail.' Harken to his own glowing words—'What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of

Christ Jesus, my Lord : for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.' Thus, when the specious structure, which he had raised with so much toil and regarded with so much complacency, was smitten by the hammer of the law, and shivered into atoms—it was that he might be driven to hide and dwell beneath the shadow of the great rock in the weary land.

The world cannot understand the paradox—that the *saint* should loathe and condemn himself, as the *sinner* never loathes and condemns *himself*. They suspect that he must be either a fanatic, or a deceiver. They know not how the stars of nature's night fade away before the revelation of the Sun of Righteousness. The more we discern His purity, the more must we discern our own impurity ; the more we behold His majesty, the more must we perceive our vileness. See how it was with the patriarch Job—chafed by contradiction, shattered by calamities, and writhing under a weight of unjust accusation, he for a season spake unadvisedly with his lips ; but what was the effect of the display of the power and greatness of God upon his mind ? He said, 'Behold, I am vile ; what shall I answer thee ? I will lay my hand upon my mouth—I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear ; but now mine eye seeth thee : wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.' Was Job less holy when he thus spake, than when he affirmed his blamelessness, and contended against every charge alleged against him ? Far from it—rather was he more thoroughly refined in the furnace. The depth of his humility was the guage of his grace : and the more he abhorred himself in the presence of God, the more God delighted in His servant. For 'to this man will I look, saith the Lord, even to him that is pure and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.' The lowliest

soul is the dearest to God. The man who has most absolutely abandoned all but Christ, is the wisest, the safest, and the happiest of men. He is nearest to the spirit of heaven, where the palm and the crown are cast before the Throne of the Lamb, and the song of the ransomed which ceaselessly sounds, is—‘Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us by Thy blood to God, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests.’ These are they ‘that have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.’

No less overpowering was the effect of the vision of the Almighty on the spirit of Isaiah the prophet, when he ‘saw the Lord sitting upon a Throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the Temple. Above it stood the seraphim ;—and one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts : the whole earth is full of His glory. And the posts of the doors moved at the voice of Him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.’ Then said the prophet, ‘Woe is me ! for I am undone ; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips : for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.’ Thus was he driven to despair by the terribleness of the majesty of the God of Heaven. But he was laid low, that he might be exalted. ‘Then flew one of the seraphim unto him, having in his hand a live coal taken from off the Altar, which he had taken with the emblem of the atoning sacrifice, that cleanseth from sin : and he laid it upon his mouth, and said, Lo ! this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.’ Thus strengthened—filled at once with humility and confidence — no sooner did he hear the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send ? and who will go for us ?’ than he said, ‘Here am I, send me.’ He was now ready for reproach—for danger—for death, in fulfilling the commission of God.

In like manner, when Jesus gave Peter a glimpse of His divine glory in the miraculous draught of fishes, at the sea of Galilee, the apostle, overwhelmed with the consciousness of his guilt as seen in that light, fell at Jesus' knees, and said, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.' The effulgence which flashed upon him, laid open to him the dark recesses of his heart, as the gleam of lightning discovers the depths of the forest. How interesting and instructive thus to trace the uniformity of effect produced by the self-knowledge which springs from the knowledge of God! As it was with the holy men of old, so has it been with the holiest and best in after times. The most eminent of them—'the noble army of martyrs'—have been the most distinguished for their lowliness. 'There,' used the martyr Bradford to say, when he saw a criminal led to the scaffold, 'there, but for the grace of God, goes John Bradford.' In the same spirit spake the admirable Bishop Beveridge, whose life was as blameless as his writings are excellent. He thus poured forth the convictions of his heart—'Alas! I can neither set my head nor heart about anything, but I show myself to be the sinful offspring of sinful parents, by being the sinful parent of a sinful offspring; nay, I do not only betray inbred venom of my heart, by poisoning my common actions, but even my most religious performances, with sin. I cannot pray, but I sin; I cannot hear or preach a sermon, but I sin; I cannot give an alms, or receive the sacrament, but I sin; nay, I cannot so much as confess my sins, but my very confessions of them are still aggravations of them; my repentance needs to be repented of, my tears want washing, and the very washing of my tears needs still to be washed over again with the blood of my Redeemer. Thus, not only the worst of my sins, but even the best of my duties, speak me a child of Adam.' Natural men sneer at such sentiments as the ravings of fanaticism, or the extravagances of *hypocrisy*. They cannot conceive of such experience. They

suspect that those who describe it, must disguise dark deeds beneath the mask of sanctity. But let them remember, that the same apostle who said, 'Our rejoicing is this; the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity we had our conversation in the world;' likewise exclaimed, 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!' whilst 'he delighted in the law of God after the inward man;' 'he knew that in him (that was, in his flesh) dwelt no good thing.' All that is holy in the believer is of the Spirit; all that is corrupt in him is of the flesh.' Hence it is, that last as well as first, he glories in Christ Jesus, and has no confidence in the flesh; hence it is, that he looks for the *mercy* of our Lord Jesus Christ, even unto eternal life; hence it is, that when he plants his footsteps on the threshold of heaven, he clings the most absolutely to the mercy of God in Christ. Yes, it is then that all who are taught of God arrive at *one point*. I have witnessed the death-beds of many of the righteous. I have watched with thrilling interest their experience in that most solemn and most searching hour; and I have found that all, whether babes or fathers in Christ, have alike hung only on the hope of the cross; yea, and the holiest have ever been the humblest in that last struggle. The language of the beautiful hymn which we have recently been singing, best expressed the one sentiment of their heart, as it throbbed—and fluttered—and ceased to beat:

'Nothing in my hand I bring,  
Simply to Thy Cross I cling.'

Yes—however aforetime some of them had been tempted to look upon themselves with complacency, or to attach importance to their doings or their observances—in that decisive moment, all vanished from their view, save the finished work of their Saviour. Neither privileges, nor sacraments, nor oblations, nor praise of men, nor ecclesiastical distinctions, nor arm of priest or pastor, shared their reliance;



but 'CHRIST WAS ALL AND IN ALL.' Every other anchor drives, every other cable snaps, before the force of the tide that sweeps the soul into eternity. One, and only one, hope retains its imperishable moorings—it is the hope set before us in Jesus. This can enable the expiring saint to exclaim, 'O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.' One, who was nearly related and tenderly endeared to him who addresses you—one, whose brief life, passed chiefly in the calmness and seclusion of a rural rectory, had been singularly blameless, said, when—within a step of eternity—she was congratulated on the bright peace which had long irradiated her sickbed, 'It is not mine; it is all of Christ—I cling to Him as earnestly as if I had been a murderer.' And her father and mine, whose whole 'path had been as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day,' and whose death was one of surpassing ecstasy, observed, a little before he entered into rest, 'My daughter said when dying, "I am saved, as the thief on the cross was;" and so say I—so says your father, my children.' Precious simplicity and singleness of hope! May it be ours in life's last agony!

Let us, then, 'hear the conclusion of the whole matter.'

Beloved, abound in all good works; be fruitful in every thing that adorns the doctrine of God your Saviour; be ensamples of them that believe; do to others as you would that others should do unto you; 'Freely ye have received, freely give;' confess your Master's name, and be jealous for His honour; 'Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things'—yet after all, and when you have done all, abandon all as supplying the slightest foundation of confidence; and with the apostle still protest, 'God

forbid that I should glory save in the cross of Jesus Christ.' You must begin with mercy—continue in mercy—close with mercy. God will not give His glory to another. Pride yourselves on your works—and you mar all. The fly is introduced into the ointment, which will make it unsavoury.

We have now set before you in this course of lectures, which, through the good hand of God upon us, we are thus allowed to bring to a conclusion, a pattern for you to copy, every way deserving of your study and your imitation. The model was selected on account of its appropriateness. You have not been called upon to trace the character of a divine or of a recluse ; but of one who had his occupation in the midst of the world—of one who encountered difficulties, overcame temptations, sustained cares, endured trials, closely akin to your own. You have seen how exquisitely coherent was his course ; how he used the world as not abusing it ; how he was more than conqueror through Him that loved us. Go and do ye likewise. Greater light, greater privileges, greater encouragements—incomparably greater—are yours. Do not, then, despair of attaining to the same excellence. Despair of self, but never despair through Christ. You cannot expect too little from yourselves—you cannot expect too much from your Saviour—you cannot too utterly renounce all trust in your own arm—you cannot confide too strongly in the arm of Christ. You have no right to say, ' We cannot succeed in hallowing our business.' Hath God commanded, and will He not enable? Hath He promised, and will He not perform? Trust, and try. Stretch forth the withered hand, in obedience and reliance, and it shall be restored. If you can believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. According to your faith it shall be unto you.

Shine as lights in your several spheres in this vast mercantile community. Irradiate with holiness each one his own

peculiar scene of action, whether it be the counting-house or the manufactory, the workshop or the warehouse. Furnish to the world a living demonstration that faith establishes the law, that the doctrine of grace is a doctrine according to godliness, that they who repudiate all confidence in works, are the most careful to maintain them. Compel those who denounce your principles to admire your practice. With well-doing put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: as free, and not using your liberty as a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Work—as though all depended on your working; rest—as knowing that all depends on what Christ has wrought. Was your first prayer—God be merciful to me a sinner? Let the spirit, if not the letter, of your life be the same. From the cross you began, at the cross you must close your race. Attain what you may, your sole satisfaction must still be—that Jesus has atoned for your sins, the purple of Christ has infinitely precious, and crimson as is your guilt, the blood which is white as snow.

Ascribe to Him whatever is good: ascribe to yourselves whatever is evil. What hast thou that thou hast not received? Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, as thou art the mighty; nor glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches—but he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. Amen.

THE END.

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